

HUBERT DE SEVRAC,

A

ROMANCE,

OF THE

Eighteenth Century;

BY

MARY ROBINSON,

AUTHOR OF

POEMS, ANGELINA, THE SICILIAN LOVER,
THE WIDOW, &c. &c. &c.

IN THREE VOLUMES,

VOL. I.

L O N D O N:

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1796.

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HUBERT DE SEVRAC.

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CHAP. I.
most important in the annals of Europe.

“O how portentous is prosperity!”

“How, comet-like, it threatens while it shines.”
YOUNG.

THE ancient chateau of Montnoir, situated on the confines of Lombardy, was the melancholy asylum of Hubert de Sevrac and his unfortunate family. Born to an elevated rank in society, and educated amidst the splendours of a court, he shrunk from the approach of poverty, because it was accompanied by the menace of disgrace, and embraced the moment which presented an opportunity for flight, under the dreadful apprehension, that the next might conduct him to a scaffold.

He commenced his wandering journey, as one who had relinquished every thing of his original consequence, except an exquisitely feeling heart, and a dignified sense of honour, which could not be subdued by the severity of fortune. Monsieur de Sevrac, previous to an epoch, the most important in the annals of Europe, enjoyed many dignified and lucrative appointments in the political affairs of France, with the hereditary rank of Marquis, and a private fortune, which had been bequeathed to his wife shortly after his marriage.

Gifted by nature, not only with every exterior grace, but with a mind, generous and benevolent, his popularity had kept pace with his good fortune; and even in the mazes of a court, where the rank weed of envy spreads its most baleful influence, he was beloved by his equals; while those who were placed beneath him revered his virtues, and felt the effects of his munificence.

But,

But, at that dreadful period, when the tumult of discontent perverted the cause of universal liberty; when vast multitudes were destined to expiate the crimes of individuals, indiscriminate vengeance swept all before it, and like an overwhelming torrent engulfed every object that attempted to resist its force. It was at that momentous crisis, that the wise, the virtuous, and the unoffending, were led forth to the scene of slaughter; while in the glorious effort for the emancipation of millions, justice and humanity were for a time unheard, or unregarded.

In the summer of 1792, the Marquis, and Madame de Sevrac, with their only daughter, and the venerable Abbé Le Blanc, quitted their habitation in the Place de Vendome, and, disguised as peasants, passed the barrier of Paris: From the heights of Chaillot, they frequently heard the distant sound of the tocsin, while the shouts of the populace filled their minds with augmented agitation.

It was at that awful hour, that de Sevrac examined the retrospect of his prosperous days. All the phantoms of delight purchased by the sufferings of the people, all the irritated tribes of wretchedness, whose wants had hitherto been unregarded, now conspired to taunt his imagination. He probed his lacerated bosom; and he found, that though no act of oppression, immediately proceeding from himself, had contaminated its feelings, he had been accessory to crimes, and deserved to participate in their punishment. The scene of delusive grandeur was at an end; the splendid pageantry viewed through the medium of reflection, faded into nothing, all of the deceptive had vanished; and the prospect before him and his companions, was cold, desolate, melancholy and forlorn.

Six hundred louis d'ors, and the jewels of Madame de Sevrac, now composed the whole of their diminished fortune; an old *sabriolet*, which they purchased on their second

second day's route, served to convey them; Madame de Sevrac and Sabina occupied the vehicle, while the Marquis and the Abbé Le Blanc walked by turns, and by turns undertook the arrangement of each day's journey. The court had been the only sphere in which they had hitherto moved with *eclat*; driven from their native circle, without a glimpse of hope, friendless, and unknown, all the corners of the earth presented, with an equal portion of attraction, an asylum, where sorrow might repose, but where memory never could be obliterated.

The first twenty-four hours stole slowly on, marked with that silence which is the effect of deep and melancholy musing. Scarcely accustomed to the disguise which was become necessary for their safety, and fearful of betraying their real situation to those, whom chance might throw in their way, and whose minds had leisure to scrutinize the sorrows of others, they agreed

to speak but little ; and they were cautious not to utter a syllable more than was absolutely requisite for the convenience of travelling. The Abbé was a native of Languedoc, and perfectly knew the provincial dialect of the country ; on him devolved the task of conversing with the inhabitants of the different places through which they were obliged to pass, until they were more at liberty to resume their names, and throw off the disguise that concealed them.

Sabina, who was the darling of her parents, frequently watched her mother's eyes, where tears of sympathy often marked the attention she paid to the varying emotions, which agitated the mind of Monsieur de Sevrac. During the third day a tempest overtook them ; the thunder rolled in successive peals above their heads, and the vivid flashes of lightning played round their carriage. As they were at some distance from any house, they hastened

retired for shelter to the skirts of a thick wood; where in a few minutes they found a safe retreat from the fury of the elements.

"I remember the time," said Madame de Sevrac, "when my heart would have shuddered, and my blood have been chilled, at the sight of the dreadfully embattled clouds, that are now bursting over us! Is it thus that calamity makes its worst scenes familiar! thus can the mind become insensible of danger by the repetition of perillous events? I have often listened to the storms of winter, when I was sheltered in the abode of prosperity; and as often sighed in pity for the poor villager, whose little dwelling was exposed to their destructive fury!"

"And yet," said Monsieur de Sevrac, "that villager was happier than yourself, cherished in obscurity, the deceptions of a court, and the clamours of an oppressed multitude,

multitude, were alike unknown to him: as he knew no guile, he dreaded no punishment; secure, amidst those of an equal station, he laboured cheerfully, and lived unenvied."

"But did the labours of the villager at all times ensure him the comforts of life?" said Sabina.

"The necessaries of life they did," replied Monsieur de Sevrac; "nature requires no more."

"Then" said Sabina, "if the nobles had relinquished their superfluous luxuries, and by a more equal participation, afforded the peasantry something, beyond the bare necessaries of life, would not the world have been more at peace?"

"The human mind is never satisfied. It is restless, irritable, and ever awake to misery:" answered the Marquis.

"Have

“ Have not the poor, *minds*, as well the rich?” continued Sabina: “ Surely they have; and as they are less cultivated, they are more liable to all the defects which you have described. Is it not barbarous then to drive that being to despair, who has not acquired the means of guarding against its approaches?”

“ I always pitied the unhappy” said the Marquis. “ I never oppressed them, Heaven knows!”

“ And yet we lived amongst such as never felt for those, whose hard fortune placed them in poverty :: all our friends, all our associates, were the enemies of the people,” cried Sabina.

“ Not all I hope,” answered the Marquis, shuddering at the reflection.

Madame de Sevrac, endeavoured to change the subject of conversation.

"The storm will soon pass over," said she "and the journey will be more pleasant after the refreshing torrents have ceased to fall."

"This," replied de Sevrac, "is but a transient tempest; when will the storm subside that pours its crimson torrents over my distracted country, that strikes her children to the dust, or scatters them over the earth to beg for mercy? what is to become of her laws? who will afford an asylum to her exiled nobles?"

"Why cannot they live like those happy villagers, whom you described just now?" cried Sabina. "You say, that they labour cheerfully, and dread no punishment: that they have the necessaries of life; and, that Nature requires no more."

The simplicity with which Sabina uttered the most penetrating reproofs, silenced

lenced Monsieur de Sevrac, the storm passed on, the evening closed, and the remainder of that day was marked by mournful rumination.

On the fourth morning, the sun rose in a clear and glowing horizon; the face of nature was luxuriantly lovely; the terrific din, to which their ears had been long accustomed, subsided; and they heard nothing round them but the songs of the birds, and the harmless conversation of the peasantry. The calmly chearful countenance of Madame de Sevrac, inspired the Marquis with additional fortitude; and before the sun set, they were all more composed and reconciled to their misfortunes.

Nothing worth recording occurred during their long journey towards the Apennines. Monsieur de Sevrac purposed continuing his flight as far as Tuscany, with an idea of departing from thence for England, in case no change should take

place in the proceedings at Paris. On his arrival at Milan, his first enquiries were after a Monsieur Ravillon, an old friend, who had been many years resident there, and who was at that time living in great opulence. The Marquis, whose high spirit was not diminished with his fortune, enjoined Madame de Sevrac and his daughter, by the most solemn promises, not to reveal the state of their finances; or discover the nature of their property to any living creature. "Exile," said he, "is not disgraceful, where its object is the preservation of a life, that has never been tarnished by dishonour: but dependance is a sort of degradation, to which I cannot bend my nature; I will toil for you in obscurity, but I will not live to see you existing on the bounty of another."

Monsieur Ravillon, had been the godson of de Sevrac's father. He was the offspring of a game-keeper, who having lost his life while attending the old Marquis

quis at the *chasse*, left the young Ravillon to the care and protection of his master. The boy was lively, shrewd, and conciliating; thus gifted, and thus circumstanced, he became the earliest companion of Hubert; who, at his father's death, had the mortification to find, that the greatest part of his property, together with the *chateau* and *terre* of Montnoir in Lombardy, became the fortune of the adopted orphan.

Fourteen years had elapsed, since the Marquis had received any letters from Monsieur Ravillon; raised from obscurity to opulence, he had not wholly forgotten the son of his benefactor; though, by his long silence, he had evinced a desire that his obligations should be no more remembered. They were nearly consigned to oblivion when Monsieur de Sevrac and his family arrived at Milan.

Ravillon's

Ravillon's mind, though fordid and ostentatious, was vigilant in the extreme, where he apprehended any event that might humble him in the world's opinion. Having assumed a considerable degree of consequence at Milan, and having passed for a near relation of the late Marquis de Sevrac's, he dreaded an explanation, which would discover the deceit, and proclaim his real origin, and his obligations to his deceased patron. In order to secure the secrecy of Monsieur de Sevrac, he made him the warmest professions of inviolable friendship. Ravillon's shrewd understanding suggested three powerful reasons for putting on an outward shew of kindness: First, lest an opposite demeanour should provoke unpleasant reproaches; Secondly, because a public display of attentions would enhance his own consequence; and thirdly, the hope of forming an alliance between his son and Sabina de Sevrac.

The

The chateau of Montnoir had been uninhabited for the term of seventeen years, which was near the period when the old Marquis expired. He had received it, with its rich and extensive domains, as the marriage portion of his wife, a Milanese Lady, who died while the young Hubert was in his infancy. Monsieur Ravillon seldom visited the chateau: the solitude which it presented was not congenial to his mind; which was vain, avaricious, imperious, an deager after every gratification that a selfish nature covets. He was of a forbidding exterior; his figure was ill-formed; his stature low; his manner cold and haughty. He was a dangerous friend, a treacherous companion; a tyrant, where he had the power to subdue; and an implacable enemy, where he felt his own inferiority. He had cunning to soothe the heart, till he twined himself about it; and cruelty to convert the bonds of confidence into the fetters of oppression.

Monfieur

Monsieur Ravillon had, before he came into possession of the extensive *terre* and *chateau* of Montnoir, married a female, of humble extraction, who died the year following, on the day that she was delivered of a son. The boy had grown up, the darling of his father: the striking similarity of mind, which proved his legitimacy, endeared him more than all the graces of worth, or all the ties of propinquity could have done. Arnaud, as his years increased, did not swerve from the model after which nature had formed him; for he was, even to the minutest imperfection, the epitome of his father.

By much artifice and a competent knowledge of mankind, Monsieur Ravillon had acquired great popularity in and about Milan. The imperfections of his heart were concealed by the multitude of little kindnesses, which his ostentation displayed. He would stab the bosom of unprotected honesty, at the same moment
that

that he rescued a villain from distress; provided, the former disputed his claim to pre-eminence; and the latter blazoned his munificence to the world. The Marquis de Sevrac was the contrast of Ravillon; warm, penetrating, ingenuous, and benevolent; he could neither conceal his resentments, or vauntingly display his virtues: the animation of his mind shrunk from the cold reserve of indifference, and the integrity of his nature despised the meanness of deception.

The melancholy ideas which were imprinted on de Sevrac's mind, were but ill suited to a scene of mixed society. The house of Monsieur Ravillon was too much frequented to allow the exiled family many hours of sober meditation. They had now to learn the task of submission; to estrange themselves from all the dazzling shows of life; to live for each other, and not for the vain and giddy ephemera of trifling crowds: They had above all, to
bend

bend patiently to the decree which fate had dealt upon them, and which seemed irrevocable: Reason was still predominant over affliction, and she pointed out the only path to repose in the quiet shades of solitude.

"Divine retreat!"

"Choice of the prudent sage of the Great"

The Marquis, finding that the chateau of Montnoir was falling fast to decay for want of proper attention, requested permission to make it the asylum of his family, till some event might permit him to revisit his native country. Unable to procure the splendours to which he had ever been accustomed, and shrinking from the idea of living on the bounty of a friend, he urged the request from day to day, till Monsieur Ravillon, with seeming regret, at last, consented to his departure.

On

On their arrival at the chateau, they found it inhabited by two domestics—Bazilio Dufanga, and his mother Jaquiline. Nature had given the former a countenance fierce and imposing; such as the imagination of a painter would suggest, as the outward sign of innate deformity. Gigantic, swarthy, and of a lowering aspect, the savage mind of Dufanga corresponded with a voice, deep and discordant. His chief employment was cutting wood in the forest of Montnoir, of which his beholders might easily have mistaken him for a wild inhabitant. He met Monsieur de Sevrac's family at the outward gate: his beard was black, and of many days growth; his long eye brows shaded his sunken eyes; and his *sabots*, (or wooden shoes) were fastened on by strips of coarse woollen, which reached only to his ankles, leaving his legs wholly uncovered. Madame de Sevrac started when she first saw him. Sabina pressed her father's arm,

am, and the Abbé Le Blanc, by a significant sigh, seemed to say, "Heaven grant us patience."

On entering the first court of the chateau, the mother of Bazilio, by a still more terrific mien, diverted their attention from her son. She was meagre, tall, and masculine; her eyes were fierce, her complexion fallow; and, though more than fifty years of age, she was still as strong and active as though she had been in the prime of life. She viewed the unfortunate family with a frowning brow: Habituated to solitude, she was little pleased at the arrival of interlopers, who would not only break in upon the silence which was congenial to her sullen mind, but would also take from her that uninterrupted free-will, to which she had long been accustomed. She gazed on the fugitives with a malignant curiosity; a smile, such as a fiend would bestow on suffering virtue, was her only greeting. She turned from

from them, as they approached; and, muttering a dreadful malediction, hurried into her apartment in the lower story of a corner tower, and hastily shutting the door, the sound of which echoed to the turrets, concealed herself, like a tygress in her den, during the remainder of the day.

Bazilio kindled a fire in a large and gloomy saloon, where the Monsieur de Sevrac and his family passed a melancholy evening; the portrait of the deceased Marquis, which decorated the damp and musty hangings, often drew tears into their eyes: the heraldry of their ancestors, adorned the tapestry which was richly wrought with tarnished gold; the floor was of inlaid oak embrowned by age and polished by labour; the furniture was of dark green velvet; and, from the ceiling was suspended a heavy antique chandelier, composed of various coloured glass, that shone dimly by one small taper, which placed on a table beneath, rendered the surrounding objects barely visible.

Sabina

Sabina de Sevrac was, in the female line, of British extraction; her mother was of a Scottish family, and was placed by her relations in a convent at Lisle. Hubert was then commencing a tour through Flanders and Germany, when by accident he beheld Emily Montrose. Fascinated by the graces of her person, he resolved to make himself acquainted with the sentiments of her mind: a mutual attachment succeeded, but the difference of religion induced the old Marquis to refuse his consent to their union. The adventurous pair were privately married, and instantly set out for England. The Marquis hearing of his son's disobedience, and being strongly attached to the catholic religion, considered his offence as unpardonable, fell into a fixed and incurable melancholy, and soon after died. To this rash alliance, Hubert attributed not only the alienation of his father's affections and the loss of the greatest part of his property, which in the fullness of resentment he had bequeathed

to

to Monsieur Ravillon, but his death also. The Marquis had been, except in the last instance, an indulgent and affectionate parent; the grief which his son experienced when he heard of his father's despondency, was undescribable. He hastened to Paris; he was kindly received; but he came too late to restore that peace of mind which the Marquis had long lost, and which returned no more. His physicians ordered him change of climate; Madame de Sevrac's situation at that moment prevented her travelling, and demanded all her husband's attentions. They took leave of the old Marquis, he wept over them; he was weak and emaciated. Monsieur Ravillon accompanied him to the forest of Montnoir, and, in a few posts, letters arrived at Paris with the melancholy news of his dissolution.

The resentment of the Marquis had not wholly shut his heart against the pleadings of humanity. His will, though it gave his

his property to Monsieur Ravillon, bequeathed it to him during his life only ; and after his death to Sabina de Sevrac and her heirs. But in case she should die without issue, his whole estate was to revert to the offspring, or nearest relative of Monsieur Ravillon.

Sabina was only three months old, when her grandfather expired. The young Marquis was overwhelmed with affliction : he considered himself as the destroyer of his parent, and during many months rejected every office of consolation : but the conciliating temper and transcendent virtues of Madame de Sevrac, in time reconciled him to his loss, and the splendours of his appointments about the court, seemed to compensate for every calamity.

At the period of their exile from Paris, Madame de Sevrac was in her thirty-sixth year ; the Marquis was one year older : equally gifted by nature and no less enlightened

lightened by education. The Abbé Le Blanc had been his tutor, from his infancy; and in a great degree supplied the place of his deceased father. The Abbé was a man of exquisite understanding, a philanthropist and a philosopher! He had shared the prosperity of his pupil, and was determined to be the faithful companion of his misfortunes.

For some days after their arrival, the situation of the chateau, and the luxuriant prospects which its battlements commanded, occupied their attention. Though their antique asylum was embosomed in an extensive and gloomy forest, its lofty towers rising above its foliage, enabled the eye to contemplate the outstretched plains of Lombardy, dotted with the castles of the nobles, and the cottages of the peasantry. On one side the vast extent of country was variegated with oak, beech and alder, till its level terminated with the majestic Alps, “ whose brown peaks boldly

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rising from the bosom of the snow," towered above vallies washed by rapid cataracts, "foaming over jutting blocks of granite, and scattering transparent mist; visible only from the refracting rays of light which darted through woods, almost inaccessible."* In another point of view, the eye caught the blue summit of a barren precipice, scantily sprinkled with moss, or with a few fantastic trees, which barely served to shelter the timorous Chamois; at others, it was fascinated by huge broken crags, or slow and shallow rivers, that winding among the roots of pines, lost themselves in divided channels.

The charms of novelty soon began to lose its attraction, and before they had passed many weeks at the chateau, Monsieur de Sevrac's mind grew impatient and

* For those beautiful and romantic descriptions, of which so many novelists have availed themselves, read Cox's Travels in Switzerland, published in the year 1789.

discontented. The placid resignation which had hitherto sustained the fortitude of his companions, hourly diminished, and a deep and thoughtful solemnity as rapidly succeeded. Madame de Sevrac and Sabina, by their united assiduities, endeavoured to divert his melancholy ; but his was that mental malady which persuasion cannot eradicate, or affection cure. The memory of his father, the political affairs of his country, the solitude that fed his affliction, and the poverty that threatened his family, united in one terrific phalanx to overturn his reason. He avoided consolation, at the moment that he shuddered at the approaches of despair ; and wept over his devoted companions while he despised himself for the weakness of his nature.

Time, which had long been beguiled by hope, now presented nothing but a source of unavailing regret. Madame de Sevrac's accomplishments and Sabina's encreasing beauty, only recalled

to mind the brighter expectations of his early days. "Better hadst thou been born in adversity my child;" would he often say; "thou hadst then acquired the task of resignation; thou hadst then learnt to labour, and to live humbly, but independent of the world." Every word which he uttered, was accompanied with the most violent emotions. Struggling with the pride of birth, and goaded by the menaces of want, his fortitude was almost subdued: his countenance was the picture of sorrow, and his sighs were the sighs of a heart broken by persecution.

In one of their evening excursions through the forest, they had wandered about till the shades of twilight began to obscure the distant Apennines. The sun had set; its last glare of splendour had receded from the edge of the horizon, leaving only the impurpled tints of a softer lustre. They were at some distance from the chateau; its lofty grey towers were

were scarcely visible when they crossed the long vistas that intersected the forest. A more than usual gloom seemed to gather round them, when the Marquis abruptly stopping, exclaimed "Have you courage to meet death? Will you return with me to Paris?"

Madame de Sevrac, startled by such a strange and sudden proposition, looked earnestly at her husband. His countenance was wild, his eyes fixed upon her, and his whole frame seemed convulsed with secret agitation; he firmly grasped her hand: "This misery," continued he, "must terminate speedily; Let us die, while our souls are yet uncontaminated. Adversity is a powerful tempter; and man but a frail and feeble engine, which villains can work and vice employ, to his own destruction. Rather than see you perish—"

We

"We shall not perish," interrupted Sabina, embracing her father, "we have intellects to employ, and health that will enable us to toil cheerfully." Monsieur de Sevrac continued —

"Can I suffer you to toil while another possesses that which by right is mine? this Ravillon revels in opulence, which should have been bequeathed to me. By artifice he won the affections of my father, availed himself of my disobedience, and seduced his mind from its paternal duty. I am in fact, *his* victim: the thought drives me almost beyond the limits of reason: it preys upon my senses, it robs me of repose: can I love the author of my destruction?

"I am the only being to blame," said Madame de Sevrac, bursting into tears. "Your affection for me, was the origin of all your father's displeasure. Every sigh of regret conveys a reproach to my heart, and

and I condemn myself for every pang you suffer." The Marquis paused for a moment, pressed his hand to his forehead, walked on a few paces, and then, stopping abruptly, continued his conversation. "When the moment of humiliation arrives," said he, "when necessity advances with all her ills, and all her accumulated horrors, to whom shall we apply for succour? to Ravillon? to the serpent, whom, from my infancy, I marked twining round the heart of my credulous father? shall I remain upon sufferance beneath the very roof that was the dowry of my mother: insult the ashes of my ancestors by a degrading submission; skulk over these vast and fertile domains like a miserable fugitive; an alien, a passive cringing coward? It cannot be: I will instantly depart."

"Alas! exclaimed Madame de Sevrac, "what would you do, and whither would you fly?"

“Any where,” replied the Marquis, “rather than bear this load of misery. This Ravillon is my evil genius; I abhor his very name: I consider him as no better than a fawning villain; he thinks that I will give Sabina to his son; I would rather see her expire, than behold her the victim of such a base alliance.” At this instant, Monsieur Ravillon abruptly met them at the corner of a vista. The Marquis with a stern countenance greeted him coldly; Madame de Sevrac and Sabina were covered with blushes of confusion; while Ravillon who had overheard the conversation, artfully endeavoured to conceal his resentment. They proceeded together towards the chateau: on their arrival de Sevrac instantly retired to his chamber, where he continued during the remainder of the night. In the morning when the family assembled, the Marquis was still sullen, silent, and gloomy; soon after breakfast, Monsieur Ravillon requested a few moments of private conversation

sation with him; they retired to an adjoining room, and the important subject was, without ceremony, unfolded. The purpose of Monsieur Ravillon's visit, was to ask the Marquis's consent for an alliance between Sabina and his son Arnaud; de Sevrac, whose pride was established on the boast of a long line of ancestry; indignantly rejected the proposal; a warm dispute ensued, the Marquis contemned the arrogance of Ravillon, who, in his turn, retorted the most sarcastic reproaches on the reduced state of de Sevrac's prospects; the insolence of the latter provoked the violence of the former, and a blow from the hand of the Marquis, put a period to the altercation.

Madame de Sevrac and her daughter, hearing all that had passed, and trembling for the consequences of so rash an outrage, rushed into the apartment. Monsieur Ravillon, so far from resenting the affront which he had received, commise-

rated the disordered state of de Sevrac's mind, and by the most persuasive reasoning endeavoured to soothe him. This conduct made a strong impression on the Marquis; after a conflict of some minutes, he threw himself on Ravillon's neck, "I cannot bear to be outdone in fortitude;" said he, "your forbearance makes me reflect on my own impetuosity with abhorrence, and from this hour we will be friends."

From the period of this event, Madame de Sevrac unceasingly endeavoured to remove her husband's aversion for Monsieur Ravillon; and to efface from his mind, every idea, prejudicial to his character. The stern and repulsive habit of Ravillon's temper also seemed to acquire somewhat of complacency, and Sabina's dislike of him, lessened every time she saw, and conversed with him. In one of their walks in the forest, she ventured to mention the anxiety and distress which she experienced
on

on account of her father's despondency. Day after day his depression of mind became more firmly rooted ; his form was wasted, his cheek colourless, his voice tremulous, his manner embarrassed, and his once benignant temper become sple-
netic and irritable. She suggested a wish that he could be prevailed on to pass a few weeks at Milan ; where, by mingling in society, the perpetual agony of thinking might be diverted, before it so strongly fastened on his faculties as to undermine his reason. Ravillon readily adopted Sabina's idea, though he knew the difficulties he had to combat, by the persevering melancholy which cast a gloom on every part of the Marquis's conduct. After earnest and repeated solicitations, de Sevrac consented ; one month being the limited period for his absence, after tenderly embracing his wife and daughter, and solemnly charging them to be careful of their little fortune, he set out with Monsieur Ravillon, for Milan.

It was night when they departed ; Madame de Sevrac and Sabina loitered at the outward gate of the chateau till the sound of the carriage wheels was scarcely distinguished from the gusts of wind that howled over the distant Apennines. Sabina stood motionless ; her eyes were fixed on the swift clouds that hastened to overshadow the waning moon : the air was cold, and through the extensive forest,

“ Unnumber'd branches waving in the blast,”
created a melancholy sound, which rendered the time and place peculiarly awful. “ Let us retire to rest ;” said Madame de Sevrac.

“ To *rest* !” repeated Sabina, sighing deeply.

“ To our chamber my love.”

“ Yes, Madame ;” answered Sabina,
“ but not to *rest* : Heaven knows, I shall
experience

experience but a small portion of tranquillity, till I see my father happier !”

Madam de Sevrac, took her daughter's hand and led her across the drawbridge. The Abbé Le Blanc fastened the gates and the family retired to their several apartments. Sabina passed a melancholy night. The weather became stormy, and the old chateau seemed to rock, with the strong blasts of wind that roared round its turrets ; while the hail and rain pelted against the long windows which rattled with a terrifying noise. A thousand apprehensions for the Marquis's safety crowded on her imagination ; she sighed, she wept ; she listened, she breathed a fervent prayer ; then listened, sighed, and wept again ; till the wind fallen by degrees, was only heard in a gentle moaning sound, which at length lulled her to sleep, and to forgetfulness. —

CHAP. II.

“ Doors creek and windows clap, and night’s foul
bird

“ Rook’d in the spire screams loud !”

BLAIR.

THE chateau which had always appeared gloomy to Madame de Sevrac and her daughter, now became insupportably lonesome. The vast extent of building, many parts of which were marked by chasms, bound together with thick ivy; the deep moat, which surrounded the outward walls with stagnant water, mantled over with dark shadowy green and so enclosed between lofty ramparts, that the air could scarcely ruffle its surface; the gates, surmounted by the strong portcullis, which guarded the ponderous draw-bridge; and the spacious courts, overrun with weeds and long grass, were visible from the windows of every apartment.

Madame

Madame de Sevrac never, for a moment, forgot the Marquis's last injunctions, respecting their little fortune. One small iron box now contained all their means of present support, and all their foundation of future subsistence. The precious treasure occupied her thoughts perpetually; the retired situation of the forest; the frequent depredations of banditti; and the discontented aspect of Bazilio Dufanga, gave birth to incessant inquietude. A fortnight after the Marquis had left the chateau, Madame de Sevrac was sitting on the terrace facing her chamber, when she heard the door gently opened, and beheld Bazilio entering, with his mother. She concealed herself from their view, and placing herself near the *jalouse* of another window, resolved to observe their proceedings.

Bazilio had left his *sabots* at the door of the chamber, and advanced barefooted towards a small closet, where Madame de Sevrac

Sevrac had deposited the iron box; with his finger pressed upon his lip, he made a sign to his mother, who smiled at the idea of obtaining a valuable booty. In his hand he held a small hatchet, which he generally used in cutting wood in the forest; his countenance was more than usually horrible; the setting sun threw a glowing light into the apartment, which displayed every feature distinctly. At the moment when Bazilio raised his arm towards the door of the closet, Sabina entered the chamber; Madame de Sevrac's fears for the safety of her child, drew her from her hiding place, and the treacherous domestics instantly escaped.

Madame de Sevrac and her daughter had gazed at each other for some time, when they were roused from their silent astonishment by the presence of Jaquilina, who returned with a supply of fire-wood for the night. "I hope that my son did not alarm you," said she, "he only came

to bring these logs; the chateau is damp, and the nights are chilly cold."

"I have never felt the inconvenience of either," replied Madame de Sevrac. Jaquilina threw the logs upon the hearth, and muttering, quitted the chamber.

"All is not right," said Madame de Sevrac, "Bazilio had no business here, except to rob us of our treasure."—

"Why do you suspect him of such a motive?" said Sabina, "his looks prejudice you against him; I have always thought him honest, though ferocious, and I should be sorry to condemn him because his features are disgusting: I have often heard my father say that the rude children of nature knew no guile; endeavour therefore to believe that you are mistaken."

"But he was armed," said Madame de Sevrac.

"So

“ So he is at all times,” replied Sabina, “ his occupation is constantly that of cutting wood in the forest ; the implement he carried was that, which is necessary for his daily labour.”

“ Alas ! my love,” said Madame de Sevrac, “ you know that the scanty store, preserved from the wreck of our once splendid possessions, is at this moment within the walls of the chateau ; you also remember the words of the Marquis, when he took leave of us. “ I solemnly charge you to be careful of our little treasure.” “ Should the iron box be stolen during his absence, we never can meet him more. His fate would be terrible !—We should have no means of affording him consolation.”

Sabina shuddered at the thought. After repeated consultations on the subject, they determined to examine every part of the chateau, and to deposit the iron box in
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some niche where curiosity or suspicion could not discover it : during that night they watched incessantly, but no one approached their chamber, and at day-break they retired to rest, almost inclined to believe that they had suspected Bazilio wrongfully.

Before noon they received a letter from the Marquis, informing them that his health and spirits were considerably improved by the change of scene since he left the forest, and concluding with the following emphatic words :—

Remember to guard our treasure
“ with a lynx’s watchfulness : it is the
“ last we can command ; when that is
“ gone, there is but one event that can
“ preserve us from infamy.”

“ Let us lose no time,” said Madame de Sevrac, as with a trembling hand she closed the letter. “ I know the temper of the
Marquis,

Marquis, and have often heard him say, that rather than be obliged to strangers for support, he would exterminate his race; and by one great act of horror, release them from the misery of dependance." Sabina heard Madame de Sevrac with attention; the dreadful purpose of her father, seemed to express itself in every word she uttered, and a thousand anticipated griefs convinced her that an immediate effort should be made. "There are many rooms in the chateau," said she, "where we can deposit it with safety; those that are wholly neglected will be most convenient for our purpose: no person would think of exploring them with the hope of plunder. At all events, we can try the experiment; and if no secret corner presents itself, the labour is trifling in comparison with the magnitude of the object. Let us, this night, when the family is at rest, summon resolution to put our scheme in practice." Madame de Sevrac agreed to the proposal, and at midnight they

quitted

quitted their chamber in order to find a convenient place for the purpose of concealing their treasure.

One side of the great court, which formed a considerable space in the interior of the chateau, was encircled by cloisters overhung with ivy and wild weeds: a narrow flight of mouldering steps, led to a gallery, on which several doors opened to a variety of apartments. This range of building was the first spot of investigation, because it had, till that period, wholly escaped their curiosity. Intent on the object of their task, they neither felt the cold night-breeze that moaned along the cloisters; nor thought of their ancestors, whose bones were perishing in the chapel beneath. The bat, disturbed by their unseasonable visit, flitted round their light; but no object, however new or strange, could divert them from their purpose. Thus, without uttering a syllable, they proceeded towards the first door on the gallery.

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An iron ring, which belonged to the latch, rusted by time and the dampness of the situation, chilled Madame de Sevrac's hand as she touched it: she opened the door, which creaked on its hinges; and then waited a few minutes to hear whether the noise had awakened the family; all was still; and they entered the apartment.

It was a vast and lofty library, thinly scattered with books, covered with blue mould, and so discoloured by the humidity of the place, that their bindings scarcely discovered a legible character. The night air poured in between the crevices of boards which were nailed before a long window in the northern aspect. They shut the door with caution, and began to examine every corner minutely. On a shelf near them, stood a volume of Ariosto; "at least," said Sabina, "we have discovered a source of amusement, for these books will contribute to our few consolations,

lations, and tend, in some measure, to enliven our solitude." She endeavoured to remove it, but it was so pressed between the shelves, that, after many efforts, the whole pannel, which was a false door, swung open, and a dark recess was presented to their view. At this moment the hollow sound of footsteps seemed to advance along the gallery: they paused, they listened, the noise ceased, and they approached the recess.

Before they had time to examine its interior, they were again startled by a deep sigh, which seemed to proceed from some person very near them: they looked round, but no door of communication was to be seen, except that by which they had entered. The recess appeared to have been intended for the purpose of devotion. It was secluded and silent; and only admitted day through a small latticed window, near the roof, not twelve inches square,

square, and opening on the gallery along which they had passed.

As the deceased Marquis had been a confirmed bigot, it instantly occurred that this was a small chapel, dedicated to his saint. It was about ten feet square: from the middle of the ceiling a brass lamp was suspended by a chain; and in a niche on one side, was placed a crucifix of ebony, before which three steps covered with tapestry, were placed for the attitude of divine supplication. There was something so awful, and yet so tranquil; so melancholy and yet so sacred, in this little chapel, that a silence of some moments followed their entrance.

Beneath the crucifix, on minute examination, they discovered a small door, which had been nailed up with the most artful ingenuity. Madame de Sevrac's curiosity was so strongly awakened, that every shadow of fear completely subsided: she almost dispaired of opening this closet, when

when she recollected having seen an iron bar which stood near the window of the adjoining library. Sabina hastened with the light to fetch it; Madame de Sevrac was no sooner left in darkness and alone, than a deep and melancholy voice, pronounced, "Seek no farther."

When Sabina returned with the iron bar, she found her mother pale and trembling, but unable to reveal the cause of her sudden change of countenance. Sabina, eager in the pursuit of discovery, placed the bar in the crevice above the small door, and by repeated efforts, with her utmost strength, at last forced it open.

The first article, which she drew from this secret repository, was a book of devotion. She attempted to open the leaves, but they were cemented together, by a congealed substance, with which the binding was also discoloured. The second, was a small carpet of tapestry, stained in

a similar manner. The third was a poniard, the blade corroded with rust, and the handle richly studded with gems of onyx, inlaid in gold. For the first time, Madame de Sevrac uttered a groan of horror; Sabina hastily replaced each of the articles, and with trembling limbs, rose to quit the chapel; when raising her eyes towards the latticed window, she beheld a human face; pale and hideous! It frowned upon her with its brow, while its mouth,

“ Grinn’d horribly, a ghastly smile !”

They were now nearly over-whelmed with terror! they knew that to return to their chamber they must pass along the gallery from whence this alarming object had presented itself. Once more they ventured to raise their eyes towards the lattice where they had beheld the dreadful visage, but it was gone!

They felt a desperate courage at this momentary release, and taking their light, rushed

rushed out of the chapel into the library, and along the gallery. They descended the mouldering steps, crossed the court, and flew to their chamber, without meeting any breathing creature : all the doors and windows were still closed, and nothing except themselves, was stirring throughout the chateau. Day had broke some time; the thin blue air that filled the clear expanse over the forest, was richly contrasted by the encreasing brightness which, spreading along the east, threw a glowing tint on the summits of the distant mountains : the tops of the tall trees that waved gently to and fro, were gilded by the approaching sun, which was still hidden from objects nearer the earth. Madame de Sevrac with a sigh, closed the *jaloussé* at her chamber window, and retired to rest.

Deep and repeated afflictions exhaust the mental faculties, and sometimes sink them into that repose, which the most trifling

trifling perplexities will at others steal from us. There had been periods in the life of Madame de Sevrac, when the disappointment of one splendid scene, or the expectation of another would have kept her waking. Yet, under all the combining circumstances of fear, sorrow and astonishment; alarmed by mysterious events, persecuted by fortune, and menaced by poverty, she could sleep! she could forget herself, her griefs, the world and its vicissitudes, and remain during six tranquil hours, insensible to every earthly calamity. Yes; while the dangers of fraud, and the machinations of villainy environed the Marquis; his wife, his affectionate wife, slept unconscious of his peril, or her own accumulating sorrows!

It was on this night, so full of terrifying events, that Monsieur Ravillon had invited a large assembly to his house at Milan. Men and women of the highest rank composed the splendid circle. It was

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on this night that the person and interesting pensiveness of Monsieur de Sevrac, made a strong impression on the fancy of a young and beautiful Italian girl, the daughter of the Count Monteleoni, a Tuscan nobleman: she was lively, fascinating, and accomplished, with a fortune independent of her father. Monsieur Ravillon had long been the slave of her beauty, but still more of her wealth. Her father had given his promise, and a day was named for their marriage. La Signora Paulina, whose actions were wholly under the direction of the Count, because she had never known the influence of a more powerful object, had not opposed his commands; even on this event, the most important and interesting of her life. She considered Monsieur Ravillon as one, whose fortune could procure her every splendour; and whose mind or person could never offend, both being objects of perfect indifference. Recently taken from a convent, where she had passed all her days from the ear-

liest infancy, she beheld the more animated scenes of the world, with wild and extatic emotions. Admired, followed, and considered as the most lovely young woman in Tuscany, in every society, at all public places of entertainment, La Signora Paulina excited universal attention.

Several weeks had passed in a series of triumphs, when Monsieur Ravillon by the chance of a gaming table, became the creditor of the Count Monteleoni, for the sum of twenty thousand sequins: rendered desperate by his ill fortune, he proposed the hand of his daughter against double the sum which he had lost: Monsieur Ravillon was again the winner, and Signora Paulina was the forfeit of her father's indiscretion.

All preliminaries were settled for the marriage when she met the Marquis de Sevrac at the house of her intended husband. She was at first struck with the graces

graces of his person, the polish of his manners, and the melancholy which cast an interesting sensibility over all his features. She had been accustomed to the vivacity of the countrymen only; she knew that her beauty was irresistible, and she beheld their labours to captivate her, as the tyrant does the toils of the slave, without pity and without remorse. Such lovers had excited her mirth; they had sometimes pleased by their wit, and flattered by their enthusiasm; all that the brilliancy of splendid life, aided by the factitious charms of conversation, from men schooled in the mysteries of gallantry could do, had been done to obtain her smile of approbation: but the unassuming worth, the retiring diffidence, the silent eloquence of stifled sorrow, the dejected mien and the pensive eye of the Marquis de Sevrac, had done more; it had awakened the sigh, it had drawn forth the tear of involuntary sensibility.

Though the Marquis was a total stranger to her, till the evening on which she met him at Monsieur Ravillon's, she had scarcely conversed with him an hour, before she fancied herself a new being. His evident depression of mind, his slow and mournful articulation, and his apparent excellent understanding, presented a dangerous contrast to the empty flippancy of her former associates. Her eyes followed him incessantly; she could listen to no other voice, she could think of no other object. She enquired of Monsieur Ravillon, who he was, and from whence he came. He briefly answered, that he was "a French emigrant, of a noble family." This intelligence only served to strengthen her interest in his favour, and to awaken that pity which is most dangerous to the heart. Ravillon observed her with a watchful eye; he frequently addressed her; her answers were vague and laconic. His pride and his avarice were touched beyond the powers of concealment: she refused to dance

dance, though dancing was her favourite amusement. At supper she sat next to the Marquis; her conversation was addressed to him only; the more he was perplexed by her attentions, the more strongly did his confusion work upon the jealousy of Ravillon. He fancied every thing that could agonize a suspicious mind. Every smile which Signora Paulina bestowed on de Sevrac, seemed to bespeak her falsehood; and every sigh which repaid it, appeared to convict him of treachery.

The supper ended and the assembly dispersed. Signora Paulina requested Monsieur de Sevrac to conduct her to her carriage: on his return to the ball room, Ravillon's eyes were instantly fixed on him. He had passed the Marquis and La Signora on the stairs, and, pretending to talk with one of the party, then leaving the assembly, had overheard her, earnestly enquiring, how long he meant to remain at Milan.

"Only a few days," replied Monsieur de Sevrac, "I shall not however relinquish the hope of being present, at your marriage with my friend."

"Never," replied Signora Paulina, "I swear that I never will give my hand to such a being." It was this solemn assurance that agitated the mind of Ravillon, and fixed its hatred against the Marquis, which was considerably augmented by a visit on the following morning from the Count Monteleoni.

"I am come," said he, "to pay my debt of honour, or to give you your revenge in any way that you shall name. My daughter's fixed determination not to become your wife, obliges me to be explicit. She has taken a solemn oath to pass the remainder of her days in a convent, if she is pressed any farther on a subject so inimical to her repose."

" 'Tis

" 'Tis well !" replied Monsieur Ravillon, " a lady's vow twice repeated, must not be broken."

" Twice repeated !" said the Count with astonishment, " I thought the resolution sudden ; for till last night, she never evinced her disapprobation of the union."

" Yes, yes," answered Monsieur Ravillon, endeavouring to smother his indignation, " it was last night that I first heard her make the vow ; did she not condescend to assign some cause for her refusal ?"

" I will not deceive you," said the Count Monteleoni, " she avows a passion for another object, to whom she will give her hand, or devote her days to a life of celibacy."

" Then she will freeze into apathy ; linger in torturing penance, and soil her
D 6 beauty

beauty with unavailing tears," answered Ravillon; "for, thank Heaven! de Sevrac is already married."

"De Sevrac!" repeated the Count; "the Marquis de Sevrac?" "Has he insulted the honour of my family, by attempting to violate the purity of my daughter?"

"Even so!" said Ravillon, "I heard him, last night, extort the vow, which she repeated to you so solemnly. This is my reward, for countenancing an exiled beggar, a mean hypocritical and despicable outcast; but let him tremble at my resentment; let him remember that the roof which shelters him is mine; that he would perish, were it not for my humanity; and, that when I banish him from his asylum, he will know the miseries, which are the result of folly and ingratitude."

"Is he not your near relation?" said the Count.

"I

“ I once acknowledged him as such,” answered Ravillon, “ but, from this hour, the miscreant shall ask from strangers that bounty, for which he has treated me so basely. He shall feed upon his titles, and bear about him all the misery that attends his fallen nobility.”

The Marquis, who was writing in an adjoining room, overheard the conversation; and unable any longer to command his resentment, rushed in; the cowardly soul of Ravillon shrunk at the sight of him, whose name, when absent, had been the theme of his undaunted calumny. De Sevrac, with a calm and dignified contempt, advanced towards him; “ I shall expect you to-morrow, at day-break, in the forest near the chateau of Montnoir; see that you fail not,” said the Marquis, and instantly quitted the apartment.

Previous to his leaving Milan, he unfolded his situation to the Count. His
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explanation was that of a candid and noble mind, and his reward, was the most unbounded confidence. Monsieur de Sevrac, in the evening, proceeded to the chateau; and the Count Monteleoni, with his daughter, early the next morning set out for Tuscany.

Madame de Sevrac and Sabina rose late, and the first subject of their conversation was the events of the preceding night. It is a strange contradiction in the human mind, that it often evinces pleasure in expatiating on past scenes, which, at the moment when they were present, excited the most painful and horrible sensations. Madame de Sevrac could think of nothing but the poniard, and the dreadful countenance which she had seen at the chapel window: Sabina was equally inclined to the weakness of superstition, and readily believed, that the phantom, which appeared to her and her mother, was that of some person who had been murdered by
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the poniard. Day made them valiant; but when the evening returned, the watchful eye, the frequent pause, the sudden start, and their great caution never to separate, declared how much their minds were impressed by the mysterious adventure.

It had been the custom of the Marquis, during his absence, daily to write a line of remembrance to his family; but the last twenty four hours had been rendered doubly tedious, by an unusual silence. Never did Madame de Sevrac stand so much in need of consolation, never did the minutes seem to creep so tardily on, or the chateau appear so compleatly desolate, as at this painful interval of anxiety. A thousand apprehensions crowded on her mind; she had twice walked with the Abbé Le Blanc to a small cottage half a league distant, on the skirts of a forest, where all letters directed to the chateau were left by the *courier*. Evening advanced

vanced rapidly; the sun had set, and the rising vapours of twilight began to spread along the forest; Madame de Sevrac would have given half her remaining days, to have protracted the approach of night, another hour. She dreaded to offend the Marquis by a peevish impatience, which made her resist Sabina's entreaties to set out for Milan. They continued to wander about the avenues near the chateau: twilight closed, and no letter arrived. "What a night shall I pass!" said Madame de Sevrac, as she approached the outward gates. Sabina raised her eyes towards Heaven, and a deep sigh was her only comment.

On the draw-bridge they were overtaken by Bazilio; he had been cutting wood. He passed them with a discontented murmur; and Sabina's ear distinctly caught the word *maledetta*. They wished him a good night: he made no reply, but entered the chateau.

Before

Before Madame de Sevrac and Sabina had entirely lost sight of Bazilio, they were consoled by the benign and open countenance of the venerable Abbé. He had been, for the third time to enquire after letters from the Marquis, and his dejected manner bespoke his unsuccessful errand. "Another *courier* will pass before midnight," said he, and I will go again; the weather is fine, and the walk will be a pleasant one." The eager alacrity with which he spoke, and the object of his expedition, united to endear him more than ever to his forlorn companions.

As the clock in the corner tower struck eleven, the Abbé Le Blanc passed over the draw-bridge. The moon shone clear, and the chateau was whitened with its silvery light. The forest was shadowed by embowering trees, except here and there, where the intersecting vistas crossed each other, and admitted the pale rays which fell

fell vertically on the path beneath. A favourite spaniel belonging to the Marquis, either walked by his side, or, after pacing forward, stopped at some angle in the road, as if to assure him that he might advance with safety. Often did the faithful animal spring from the ground playfully, and, by his instinctive attachment beguile the solitude of its gloom, and the night air of its coldness: for the Abbé, engaged by the sportive tricks of his companion, frequently quickened his pace, and sometimes ran forward, till exercise warmed his blood, and gave new strength to his exertions.

At length he reached the cottage: he was answered from the window, that the courier had passed, but had left no letters for the chateau. The Abbé sighed, exclaimed "*patience!*" and turned his footsteps back through the forest.

Madame de Sevrac and Sabina were waiting with impatience, their candle quiver-

quivering in the socket, and their eyes humid with tears, when they heard the chains of the draw-bridge rattle as it was let down. "He is returned!" said Madame de Sevrac, "Heaven grant that he may bring news from Hubert." She had scarcely uttered these words, when the Abbé Le Blanc rushed in, pale, and covered with blood.

Madame de Sevrac shrieked—

"Does my father live," cried Sabina in the agony of horror; and instantly sunk senseless on the floor.

"I must return to the forest. He will bleed to death," said the Abbé, with a faltering voice, and instantly darted out of the room. Madame de Sevrac, after consigning her daughter to the care of Jaquilina, flew to the draw-bridge; she had just passed the outward gate beyond the moat, when she heard a long and agonized

agonized groan; she stopped and listened; a second, deeper than the first, marked the spot from whence it proceeded. She had not resolution to advance a step, but was leaning powerless against the rampart, when the Abbé Le Blanc and Bazilio came running towards her: encouraged by their presence, she collected her scattered spirits, and, in a few moments proceeded with them towards a gloomy part of the forest.

The groans became more frequent, but more faint; Bazilio carried a lantern, the moon being by this time entirely obscured; they entered a winding narrow path, and directed by the voice soon reached the spot, where the object, from whom it proceeded lay on the turf, in extreme agony. Just as they approached him, Bazilio, by falling over the root of a withered tree, overset his lantern, and extinguished the light. The groans ceased, but Madame de Sevrac, who had caught a glimpse of the body, threw herself on the

the ground and snatching it to her arms, exclaimed, "He is dead! he breathes no longer."

The Abbé Le Blanc assisted her to raise the body; the blood which poured copiously from its wounds, wetted the arm of Madame de Sevrac. They supported him by sitting on the turf; he had fainted, but in a few minutes returning respiration convinced them that he was still living. Madame de Sevrac frequently addressed him, but he was too much exhausted by the effusion of blood, to answer her. They raised him on his feet, and with caution led him towards the draw-bridge. The only ray that directed their steps, was that of a glimmering taper in one of the windows of the chateau, and by the time that they entered the gates, the grey morning light began to gleam over the forest.

CHAP. III.

"Sure the foul fogs that hang in lazy clouds

"O'er yonder moat, infect the moping air,

"And steam with phrenzy's melancholy fumes."

HORACE WALPOLE.

THE joy which Madame de Sevrac felt, on knowing that the wounded traveller was not the Marquis, instantly communicated itself to Sabina and the Abbé Le Blanc; by their united assiduities, the stranger in a short time, recovered the power of speech; his wounds, for he had received several, were carefully bound up, and the effusion of blood being stopped, he began to converse articulately, and to thank Madame de Sevrac for her kindness and hospitality. On her speaking to Sabina, in English, as Jaquilina led her out of the saloon, she was astonished at being addressed in the same language by Mr. St.

Clair:

Clair : the great alarm which the whole family had experienced, had hitherto prevented every enquiry into the particulars of the outrage ; which were now repeated by the stranger.

“ Among the intricate mazes of the forest,” said he, “ the postillion who drove me lost his way ; I found that he had quitted the main road ; and by the violent motion of the carriage, I knew that he was advancing on ground, which could not possibly be a beaten track. Perceiving a light, which gleamed from a window at no great distance, I stopped my guide, and quitted my chaise, in the hope of reaching some house on foot, where I might enquire the road by which I could proceed with safety. I had scarcely advanced three paces, when a ruffian darted from behind a clump of trees, and instantly wounded me. The weapon which seemed to be a poniard, did not disable me from making some resistance ; but
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on finding me unarmed, he repeated his blow several times; in the contest I fell; my head struck against the root of a tree, and for a time, entirely stunned me. Yet I perfectly recollect, that the assassin, as he gave his last wound, exclaimed, "Receive thy death from the exiled de Sevrac."

Madame de Sevrac was struck dumb with horror! the venerable Abbé clasping his hands in an agony of despair, uttered the most frantic sorrow, while Bazilio, with a malignant satisfaction, smiled at the miseries he anticipated, and leaving the room abruptly, muttered * "*De Sevrac, assassino, guardatevi bene, tu non mi scapperai.*"

The manner and voice of Bazilio, struck new terrors into the mind of Ma-

* De Sevrac, assassin, have a care thou shalt not escape me.

dame

dame de Sevrac. She stood for a moment like the image of despair, and then threw herself on her knees before the stranger. It was some minutes before she could articulate a syllable; but her struggling heart at last recovered its strength, and the language of nature rushed from it to the tongue; "Did he escape?" was her first question.

"He did," answered St. Clair. "but I should know the villain's voice in any part of the world; and he shall be brought to punishment."

"Oh! do not say so," cried Madame de Sevrac, clasping his hand and covering it with a torrent of tears; "He is not a villain; he is an unfortunate exile, a wretched wanderer, driven by some persecuting fiend to this last act of desperation! He is no practised murderer; born nobly, and as nobly educated, nothing but the loss of reason could have made him criminal. Promise, Oh! promise never to

molest him." Her tears, her agony overpowered her, and she fell at the feet of St. Clair incapable of proceeding.

"Madam," said he, bewildered with astonishment, "consider for whom you are pleading; for an assassin: a midnight plunderer."

"Alas! I am pleading for a darling husband!" replied Madame de Sevrac, starting up wildly: "for one, on whom my soul doats, though banished from his country, driven to despair, and stigmatized with murder! Compassionate his child, his unoffending offspring,—she is not guilty, yet she will perish with her father."

St. Clair, touched to the heart by what he heard, raised Madame de Sevrac from the ground. "Your husband's life is safe Madam," said he: "I will quit the chateau in a few hours, lest I should be

be compelled to give evidence against him. Suffer one of your servants to seek after my carriage, which is probably at the next post-house, and to desire that it may be at the gates as soon as possible; my servant who had been sent on to order horses, when the disaster happened, is there also.

“May I believe that you will spare him?” said Madame de Seyrac.

“Depend upon my solemn promise,” answered St Clair. She threw her arms about his neck in an extacy of gratitude, while a tear that did not disgrace his manhood, fell on her cheek. He again conjured her to be confident in his honour, and requested permission to repose himself for an hour, previous to his departure. He walked feebly towards Madame de Sevrac’s chamber, which, being the only one well aired in the chateau, she had ordered to be prepared for his reception.

Sabina was fortunately absent, when St Clair unravelled the dreadful secret: the tender affection which she bore towards her father, prevented Madame de Sevrac's revealing it; and as she believed that Bazilio did not clearly comprehend the language in which it was told, she hoped that it would never transpire. The sun rose while Madame de Sevrac waited for St. Clair's awaking; Bazilio had been dispatched some time for the carriage, and had found it, with the servant on the skirts of the forest.

Before Bazilio's return, St Clair had quitted the chateau; Madame de Sevrac attended him to the outward gate; as he stepped into his carriage she again whispered, "remember;" he assured her of his secrecy, and also promised that he would proceed on his *route* without delay, and would suffer his servant to dress his wounds till he could employ a surgeon at such

such a distance as would prevent every shadow of suspicion.

A portion of the load, a weighty portion was removed from Madame de Sevrac's mind, by the departure of St. Clair ; but the fate of the Marquis was still uncertain. The fears that he had been apprehended, that his conscience had urged him to a confession of the crime, or induced him to fly from the horrors of detection, crowded successively on her brain, and agonized it almost to frenzy. As soon as St. Clair's carriage turned the corner at the end of the avenue, Madame de Sevrac hastened to her chamber. The first object she beheld, was the iron box, which contained the precious charge of the unhappy Marquis. Her tears flowed abundantly : her grief was augmented by the recollection of his solemn injunctions when last they parted. " Pernicious gold !" said she, " thou hast driven my husband to this deed of desperation ; thou
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hast

hast stained that name with blood, which, till now, was spotless as the snow upon the mountain."

She was roused from her melancholy reverie, by the sound of horses trampling over the draw-bridge: she flew to the window, her heart bounded with a mixture of hope and fear; it was the Marquis. He entered the chateau with the utmost composure; his air was unembarrassed, and his countenance smiling. Madame de Sevrac hastened to meet him; Bazilio held his horse while he dismounted; in his hand he carried a *musqueton** which was covered with blood; he instantly proceeded to a lower apartment which opened to the court, where he had scarcely embraced his trembling wife, when four armed men rushed in, and seizing the Marquis, commanded him to surrender.

The consternation which this event occasioned, prevented his making any reply,
one

* Blunderbuss.

one of the men secured the musqueton, another searched the prisoner, and found upon him a brace of pistols. He was instantly bound with cords, hurried across the court, over the draw-bridge, and into a carriage which waited at the outward gate. In vain did he attempt to expostulate, he was commanded to reserve his defence for that awful moment, when he would most stand in need of it. The shrieks, the prayers, the tears of Madame de Sevrac, availed but little : as the officers of justice dragged her husband from her weak grasp, one of them, on observing blood on her arm, made her also a prisoner ; “ let us secure her,” said he, “ there is no doubt but she is an accomplice.”

As soon as one of them had fastened her with cords, the other proceeded with Bazilio to search every apartment in the chateau. In Madame de Sevrac's chamber, they found a handkerchief and neckcloth, both stained with blood ; their next prize

was the little iron box, which contained all the treasure of the unfortunate Marquis. They then requested that Bazilio would lead them through all the apartments of the chateau; when they came to the library they found the pannelled door open, and the bar on the floor. The secret closet was examined, and the poniard drawn forth, the dim light prevented their seeing the state of the book, or of the tapestry; curiosity was gratified to what they deemed conviction; they hastily packed the several proofs in a trunk, and immediately returned to Madame de Sevrac. She was now informed that they were bound by the laws of the country to convey her to a place of security: her speech was interdicted; she attempted, in vain, to extenuate her husband's crime; a second carriage waited, and she was led towards it, that in which the Marquis was a prisoner was still at the gate; Sabina accompanied Madame de Sevrac, who was also guarded by two stern and unrelenting ruffians.

When

When Madame de Sevrac was placed in the carriage she earnestly entreated that the Abbé Le Blanc might be permitted to attend her. The officers of justice conceiving that he might throw a new light on the affair, consented to her solicitations. Every apartment in the chateau was searched, but in vain ; he was no where to be found ; he had not been seen since the dreadful event was revealed by Mr. St. Clair. His absence at such a moment greatly augmented Madame de Sevrac's affliction ; for, as he had a kind and feeling heart, and was zealously attached to the Marquis and his family, she hoped he might prove a powerful advocate, whenever they appeared before a tribunal of justice.

The carriages, in traversing the forest only a short distance from the chateau, had to pass near the quarter where Mr. St. Clair, was wounded. From the draw-bridge to the fatal place, many marks of blood were visible ; but when they came to

the exact spot, where the turf was yet crimson with congealed gore, Madame de Sevrac could not suppress a groan of horror: she looked wildly towards it, and her whole frame was convulsed with agony. Her guards, whose eyes were long practised in the task of watching, observed her agitation, which they considered as an additional proof of her being an accomplice in her husband's crime.

On the day of their melancholy journey, nature, as if she delighted in mocking the sorrows of her children, seemed to display her charms with ostentatious splendour. The sun, which till the evening, had flamed over an unclouded sky, then shed a blunted lustre through the thick shades of oak and alder which clothed the country. They proceeded for some miles in that sort of twilight gloom which was congenial to their feelings: Sabina was uniformly silent, pale, desponding, and heart-broken: her mind, wholly occupied

occupied by a mournful train of ideas, was wholly inattentive to the diversity of surrounding objects; till she was awakened from her stupor, by the buzzing of the throngs, which curiosity had drawn together in every village through which they passed as they approached Milan.

The carriage, with the Marquis and his two attendants, was only a few paces before that which conveyed Madame de Sevrac and her daughter. The idea of their crime roused the indignation of the peasantry, and their ears were at times saluted with execrations from the unfeeling, and sighs of pity from the benevolent. Some were sceptical as to the justice of their accusation; and others swayed by vulgar prejudice, attributed to the wretched family, all the atrocities which have stigmatized *some* of their countrymen.

At midnight they reached the prison destined for the worst class of criminals.

On stopping at the gate, Madame de Sevrac suffered the agony of seeing the Marquis first led from his carriage, and closely guarded: a lamp, which hung over the entrance, presented him to her view, as he ascended the steps with a firm and undaunted mien. The second carriage advanced, as the first drew from the door; all the horrors of a prison, all the miseries and disgrace that threatened Madame de Sevrac at that moment yielded to the consoling thought that she should again behold and converse with her husband. The light of the lamp fell upon her face, which was animated with a faint smile as she uttered, "we shall see him Sabina; thank Heaven! we shall see him once more."

The Marquis was instantly hurried to his dungeon, and Madame de Sevrac, to one adjoining. Sabina was conducted to an apartment, a degree less gloomy in point of situation, but rendered doubly horrible, by the cruel separation which this seeming indul-

indulgence occasioned. She was lodged in the highest story of a lofty tower, which had two small grated windows, one commanding an extensive view of Lombardy; and the other overlooking the interior of the prison. One chair and a miserable bed, adorned this dreary apartment; the door of which was strongly bolted, and seldom opened, a small square grating in the center pannel being made for the convenience of conveying either food, or such communications, as the jailor deemed it safe to allow her.

When Madame de Sevrac found that all intercourse between the Marquis and his family was prohibited, her anguish was complete. To have attended him; to have consoled him with her affection; to have lulled his mind, or fortified it with patience; to have watched his short and broken slumbers, would have been her only employment: but even this melancholy task was now denied her. On entering

tering her dark damp dungeon the first found she heard, was the clinking of the chains at that moment placed upon the person of her husband! She listened; she scarcely breathed; she was not conscious, that at the same moment her own hands were fettered, or herself consigned to total darkness.

She seated herself on her mattress near the wall, down which unwholsome vapours rolled in successive streams, and placed her ear close to the flinty partition which separated her from her Marquis. The jailors were some time in performing their dreadful task, which, by de Sevrac's throwing himself on the ground, she knew, was at length completed. His guards then unlocked the door of the dungeon, and she heard the Marquis say, in a distinct and steady tone, "See that you treat my wife and daughter mercifully." He received no answer: the door was locked and triple bolted, and instantly a death-like silence followed.

Madame

Madame de Sevrac passed the remainder of the night in listening to catch the sound of her husband's voice. Sometimes the rattling of his chains, as he turned upon his straw bed, at others, the broken sigh, or long deep groan, wrung her heart with unutterable torture. She often thought of making him sensible that she was the tenant of his neighbouring dungeon; but she felt that the knowledge of her sufferings would only augment those of the Marquis, while she was incapable of affording him the smallest consolation. To hear the tone of his voice, to number his sighs, or to hope, by his silence, that he had sunk into refreshing slumber, now comprised the whole sum of Madame de Sevrac's gratifications; and she sometimes even thought, that had Sabina been the companion of her solitude, she could have borne the horrors of her fate, not only with fortitude, but with resignation.

Morning

Morning came, but she was no longer apprized of its return, either by the songs of the birds, or the brightness of the horizon. She beheld none of those beauties which nature had exhibited from the chateau of Montnoir.

She only knew that it was day, by the deep sound of the prison bell, whose lingering vibration echoed through the subterraneous abodes of the guilty and the unfortunate. Two hours had elapsed, and a continual silence in the adjoining dungeon, began to excite the strongest emotion of terror in the mind of Madame de Sevrac : the dreadful idea that the Marquis was no longer living, now filled her heart with agonizing affliction ; she was perplexed in the extreme ; not daring to utter her complaints, lest her fears should be groundless, and she should awaken the sufferer from that sleep, which could alone sustain his strength under the pressure of his misfortunes. She was relieved from
approach-

approaching despair by a deep groan from the Marquis, which, in any other situation, would have wrung her heart to its innermost recesses. "Thank Heaven! he still breathes;" said Madame de Sevrac in a whispering voice, while a torrent of tears gave a momentary relief to her sufferings.

As it was midnight when she arrived at the prison, she was not without hope, that the dawn would present some gleam of light to her solitary dungeon; and her disappointment at hearing the clock strike the morning hours, while she still observed the same blank scene of cheerless oblivion, was at once terrible and distracting. The rigour with which both the Marquis and herself were treated, left not a doubt in her mind, that St. Clair had died of his wounds, and, previous to his dissolution had violated his promise of secrecy, the nature of the crime she knew to be such as would not admit of palliation; she anticipated

anticipated the dreadful fate which awaited the Marquis, and having determined to perish with him, endeavoured to prepare her mind for the worst that could happen.

At eight o'clock the jailor opened the door of her cell; he brought the scanty portion of sustenance, which is allotted for the faint and woe-worn criminal; and which the rigour of the law, deems sufficient, to strengthen the body and invigorate the mind, either to endure the mischiefs of a long and painful captivity, or to meet with fortitude, the terrible termination of all earthly suffering.

The sight of any living object, and the feeble glimpse of day which entered at a grated window in a long passage leading to her dungeon, for a moment seemed to cheer her spirits; the jailor took her hand and led her forth to a small square open court, encompassed with lofty walls, and
trebly

trebly secured with pointed spikes placed in all directions. As soon as she came into the broad day light, the change of atmosphere was so powerful that her limbs failed to support her, and she fell into the arms of the jailor. "Madam," said he, "be comforted : you are conducted hither, in order that you may breathe a purer air, and acquire that strength of body which can alone sustain your fortitude of mind. The rules of the prison allow you only ten minutes ; but I will venture to double that time, if you find yourself revived by the experiment."

"Will they allow the Marquis the same indulgence?" cried Madame de Sevrac feebly.

"I am forbid to answer any questions," said the jailor, "ours is a cruel office, and I am already weary of it." There was something compassionating in the countenance and voice of the young man, that
fixed

fixed the attention of Madame de Sevrac ; she still leant upon his shoulder, he trembled, and looked sorrowful ; he turned from her to conceal his emotions, but she still watched him with a searching eye : “ Oh ! you are a gentle spirit,” said she, “ sent to recall me from the abyss of misery ! I read in your countenance the pity of an angel !” She could not proceed, her eyes closed, a death-like paleness overspread her features, and she seemed to lose the power of recollection. He conveyed her instantly to her cell, she sunk to the ground, and he hastened to fetch a lamp, dreading a severe reprimand for having exceeded the time allowed for her morning refreshment.

In a few minutes she began to recover : the young jailor whose name was Justin Latour, knelt by her side and supported her : the instant she opened her eyes, she recollected her vicinity to the cell of the Marquis, and conjured her guard to speak
fo

so low as not to make him acquainted with her situation.

"The Marquis is led forth for air," said Latour, a sudden impulse of affection rushed through the heart of Madame de Sevrac, and made her desperate, she sprang from the ground and rushed towards the door, exclaiming, "for one moment, only for one moment let me behold him." Latour gently drew her back, and entreated her to relinquish so rash an attempt. She instantly heard the clinking of chains in the dark passage, and immediately after the door of the adjoining dungeon was closed, and bolted.

She now entreated Latour to inform her how the keeper of the prison had disposed of her daughter, and whether she was safe? He assured her that she was; and conjured her to be convinced that he would do every thing in his power to lessen the rigours of her confinement. Encouraged

couraged by his gentleness and complacency, she ventured to encroach still farther on his kindness : she observed that he had none of those characteristics, which are generally visible in men, who chuse the dreadful trade of torturing their fellow creatures ; and was not without hopes that he would prove a valuable friend, as far as his humanity could be exerted, without endangering his own safety.

She ventured to propose that on the following night when the prison should be still, he should conduct Sabina to her cell, that she might once more embrace her, and enjoy the felicity of a few moments conversation. Latour hesitated ; the pleadings of a fond parent languishing for the sight of a darling child, powerfully touched his heart ; but the danger of such an enterprise checked the ardour of his zeal, and he had not resolution either to comply or to refuse. To have proposed an interview with the Marquis would have been
useless,

useless, because the key of his dungeon was not kept by Latour: but as a visit from Sabina was more practicable, she did not cease to urge it, till Justin penetrated by her sighs and tears, endeavoured to tear himself from her. In vain did he attempt to escape; the feelings of humanity struggled at his heart, and while they melted it to tenderness, they enfeebled his whole frame. Weak as Madame de Sevrac was, she still held him; she hung round him with supplicating solicitude. "Hear me," said she, "in pity hear me."

She was interrupted as she was proceeding by the loud rattling of her husband's chains; her voice had roused him from sleep, which was produced by the short change of air he had been permitted to enjoy. He started from the ground; she heard the sudden movement, and recollection instantly told her what she had done. She grasped the arm of Latour, and pressed her finger on her lip; while her averted

averted eyes were turned with horror towards the adjoining dungeon.

She continued thus fixed and aghast. Latour beheld her with commiserating sorrow: his countenance was downcast and melancholy, his limbs trembled, and his eyes were overflowing with tears of pity. The Marquis, again finding that all was silent, concluded that his senses had deceived him; "Oh God!" exclaimed he, "it was but a dream!" and again threw himself in his straw, in the anguish of disappointment.

Madame de Sevrac, after a pause of some minutes, in a low and tremulous whisper, conjured Latour to convey a message from her; "it is," said she, "to my husband's friend; he is powerful; he can perhaps intercede for a mitigation of our sorrows."

Latour promised to undertake the task, though he assured her, that perpetual imprisonment—

prisonment would be the consequence of detection. "This night," said he, "as soon as the clock has struck twelve, you may expect to see me; and if there is any possible method of arranging it, I will bring your daughter with me. But I must now leave you; I have already staid too long; many miserable beings are waiting for their morning's refreshment."

"Oh! hasten to them," cried Madame de Sevrac in a low whisper. Latour bid her be comforted; and after assuring her once more of his fidelity, quitted the dungeon. During the whole day she watched and listened; the hope of embracing her child sustained her fortitude and amused her mind even in the gloom that surrounded her. At twelve o'clock she observed a gleam of light under the door of her cell; it disappeared; she then threw herself on the ground, placed her ear close to the crevice, and heard indistinct whisperings in the subterraneous passage:

again the light was visible, the key was gently turned, her heart beat quick with expectation, the door opened, and a surly ruffian entered the dungeon.

He closed the door, and stood frowning upon her. "There is some villainy going forward," said he, "but those must be expert who can cheat my vigilance;" then, fixing himself in an obscure corner, he darkened his lantern, and commanded Madame de Sevrac not to utter a syllable.

Presently a light again shone through the crevice, Madame de Sevrac having placed herself close by the door, the moment it was opened, blew out the lamp, which Latour carried, and bade him instantly fly. The jailor now sprang from his corner, and rushing into the passage, pursued him, leaving the door of Madame de Sevrac's cell open and unguarded.

The first idea which struck her mind, was that of endeavouring to make her escape;

escape; but when she recollected that the Marquis was still a prisoner, her resolution failed, and her feet seemed rooted to the earth. In a few moments the ferocious savage returned, and seizing the hand of Madame de Sevrac, informed her that she must remove to a distant part of the prison. She was perplexed almost to frenzy by this intelligence. She dared not confess that being near the dear object immured in the adjoining cell, rendered the gloom less horrible than the severity of the laws designed it should be. She knew that to point out a gleam of consolation, was to lose sight of it for ever. She beheld nothing in the features of her tyrant like those benignant traits which characterized the humane Latour. She knew that her prayers and her tears would not soften the flinty breast of the jailor; though they would madden her husband, pent as he was between impenetrable walls, weighed to the earth with fetters, and tortured by the horrors of his approaching destiny: she was therefore resigned and silent.

The jailor led her hastily along damp and dreary passages, where mingling sighs and groans frequently startled her as she proceeded. At last, ascending three steps, he opened a small square room, where with a malignant smile of triumph, he bade her farewell, and left her.

She had not been long in her new apartment, when, as the dawn appeared, she discovered that she had traversed an imperceptible ascent, and that her situation was no longer subterraneous. A slanting sheet of light which penetrated an aperture in the wall, drew her towards it; and, as day brightened, she discovered that it opened to an outlet of the prison. Upon a more minute examination, she also found, that it was only two feet above the surface of the earth, and that it over-looked a meadow, at the extremity of the ramparts. She felt her mind much invigorated by her change of situation. She trusted that chance would lead some person near the walls,

walls, that the sound of a human voice would administer consolation, that she should know the progressive hours of day and night, with a thousand other circumstances, never thought of by the happy, but of infinite importance to the inhabitant of a dungeon.

Night came—and she found that the penetrating breeze which entered at the narrow aperture, rendered her new situation more chilling even than her former lodging. With impatience did she wait the tedious interval of darkness, and with joy, (for every bliss is heightened by its comparison with torture), did she behold the first glimpse of morning. Even the pale grey light, and the solemn stillness of the hour, had charms for the afflicted heart of Madame de Sevrac.

Three weeks had passed, when as she sat, pensive and disconsolate, watching the twilight gleam as it receded from the ad-

jacent meadow ; on a sudden her heart bounded as she heard a low and tremulous voice hastily address her. It was the compassionate Latour ; he had escaped from the prison on the night when he failed in his humane enterprise ; but in descending from the walls, he fell ; having dislocated one arm, and being severely wounded on the forehead, with difficulty he reached a place of concealment. The attentions he received during his confinement, were prompted by the affection of a Norman girl, who had followed his fortunes ; and who, though born of noble parents, had given him her hand in marriage. To her he also owed the knowledge of Madame de Sevrac's new situation ; his wife having past by accident near the aperture in the wall of her prison, and hearing her, in an agony of despair, pronounce the name of the Marquis, instantly informed Latour of the circumstance, and conducted him to the spot from whence the complaint had proceeded.

Madame

Madame de Sevrac's surprise was equal to her satisfaction, at once more hearing the sound of a commiserating voice.—“I came,” said Latour, “to know if I can render you any service, before I quit Milan; at to-morrow's dawn I must depart; for if I am discovered, the punishment I shall suffer will be severe. My fellow jailor overheard the conversation which passed between your daughter and myself, wherein I offered to assist in your escape; he acknowledged this when he overtook me.” He then gave an account of his manner of falling from the prison walls, and of his being wounded. “Be brief Madam,” continued Latour, “if you have any thing to communicate, for I must be gone.”

“Will you convey a message for me to Monsieur Ravillon,” said Madame de Sevrac.—Latour started—“Know you not,” cried he, with a faltering voice, “that your husband is the murderer of Ravillon?”

Madame de Sevrac shrieked at this dreadful intelligence. "You have alarmed the guard," said Latour, "I must escape: Heaven protect you, and sustain your soul with fortitude."

Madame de Sevrac listened long, and often called on Latour, but he was beyond hearing. The horrible event which he had disclosed, almost bewildered her reason. "The murderer of Ravillon! Then every gleam of hope is vanished!" cried Madame de Sevrac. All that happened at the chateau of Montnoir now recurred to her memory: all the incoherent ravings of the Marquis, the detestation he had expressed whenever Ravillon's name was mentioned, and the readiness with which he accepted his invitation to Milan, united in dreadful confirmation of Latour's report, and she considered her husband's death as inevitable.

From

From that moment Madame de Sevrac resolved, however the event of her trial might terminate, to share the fate of her husband. The last fatal circumstance which she had heard, precluded every shadow of doubt, and taught her to prepare for certain annihilation. No sigh of unavailing regret, no tear of womanish tenderness, betrayed the weakness of her sex. She had lived for the Marquis, and she had courage to relinquish that life, which could no longer be devoted to his happiness.

CHAP. IV.

"Death shakes the happy ;

"But he who is a wretch, receives him gladly."

AARON HILL.

A Variety of circumstances, almost amounting to proofs, combined to criminate the Marquis, and to exclude every chance of his escaping. Ravillon, previous to his departure from Milan, declared to an intimate friend, a Monsieur Clermont, that he had been challenged by de Sevrac ; but he did not mention either the time or place, fixed on for the rencontre. On the same evening that the Marquis left the city, Ravillon also disappeared. Monsieur Clermont, anxious for the safety of both parties, resolved to follow them, and to propose some accommodation: he dispatched messengers to all the gates of Milan, and one of them was informed, by the

the *sentinella*, that Monsieur Ravillon had passed, and taken the road towards the forest of Montnoir.

After sending information to the *giudice di pace*,* in order to prevent mischief, Monsieur Clermont proceeded immediately, on horseback, towards the chateau; and, by travelling with the utmost speed, reached the forest before day-break. On entering the principal avenue which lead to the gates, he heard the sound of a foot passenger hastily running towards him. "Proceed no farther," said the stranger, "there has been a murder committed not far off: I was passing at the time, and the assassin has escaped."

Monsieur Clermont leaped from his horse, and, presenting a pistol, commanded the man instantly to return with him to the spot where the deed had been perpetrated.

* Justice of the peace.

The stranger refused to comply, on the plea of being unarmed, and assured Monsieur Clermont that he was a poor and inoffensive peasant, whose residence was in a small village, on the border of the forest. After repeated entreaties, with a promise not only of protection, but reward, he consented to lead the way. The moon being obscured by thick clouds, they were at a loss how to proceed; having quitted the main road, they were soon bewildered in endless labyrinths, and after wandering a considerable time, gave up the pursuit as hopeless.

As the dawn broke over the distant mountains, they discovered that they had taken the path which led to a village near four miles from the chateau. Monsieur Clermont was on horseback, his companion walked by his side, leading a spaniel. "Alas! Signor," said the peasant, "I cannot let you depart, without telling you all that I know, respecting this horrid murder; I have nothing

nothing to depend on but my good name, and though it grieves me to tell the truth, conscience would not let me rest, were I capable of concealing it." Monsieur Clermont alighted from his horse, and walked with the peasant, who proceeded in his story.

"Returning to the village soon after midnight, and crossing a bye path in the forest which was the shortest way, on a sudden I heard the sound of voices. I drew aside, and concealing myself behind a clump of firs, resolved to listen to what was passing. The conversation continued a very short time, when a stern and angry voice exclaimed, "Receive thy death from the exiled de Sevrac." The assassin mounted his horse, and instantly escaped. I heard a piercing groan, and a profound silence followed."

"Why did you not fly to assist the wounded victim?" said Monsieur Clermont.

"Because,"

"Because," replied the peasant, "I was afraid, that, should I be found near the body, I should be considered as the murderer."

"Well, and how did you proceed?" said Monsieur Clermont—the peasant continued.

"Before I had time to think on what I should do, the assassin returned, on foot; he approached the body, which lay on the turf; listened for a moment to its dying groans, and again betook himself to flight. This spaniel stood howling over the wounded man; I whistled, he ran towards me, was familiar, and I secured him. Alas! Signor, I know the animal; he belongs to the Marquis de Sevrac; his name is on his collar."

"'Tis too true!" exclaimed Monsieur Clermont, almost petrified with astonishment.—The peasant resumed his narrative.

"I fol-

"I followed the assassin at a convenient and cautious distance, merely by the hollow sound of his footsteps on the dry turf, for the darkness of the forest prevented my distinguishing his figure, and I never ceased hearing him till he reached the chateau of Montnoir. The gates were opened, and he entered: I then resolved to give the alarm at the next village, and it was as I was hastening thither, that I met you."

Monsieur Clermont instantly set out for Milan, and strictly enjoined the peasant to follow without delay. Within a league of the forest he met two carriages with the officers of the police, dispatched by the *syndic di pace*, for the purpose of arresting the Marquis and Monsieur Ravillon, in case any outrage was attempted. Monsieur Clermont stopped them, and having given information of all that had passed, returned to Milan, while the two carriages proceeded towards the chateau.

From

From the evening that the challenge was given, Monsieur Ravillon had never been heard of. Circumstances were strongly against the Marquis, and every enquiry, accompanied by the most minute search, having been made in vain, it was naturally concluded that the body had been buried in the forest, either by Monsieur de Sevrac, or by some person in his family: suspicion pointed out the Abbé Le Blanc as his confederate; and, his having absconded, confirmed the opinion.

The morning came which was to decide the fate of the Marquis. The awful tribunal assembled; every object that presented itself to the surrounding multitude seemed to inspire a solemn and silent attention, and every face exhibited proofs of the mind's occupation. Some were sorrowfully pensive; others, as if stricken with horror, gazed with fixed eyes on the man, who was destined to sit in judgment on the unfortunate family; while many, dead

dead to the sensations of humanity, looked only with eager curiosity for the appearance of the prisoners.

The Marquis, previous to his trial, had been desired to prepare for the tremendous moment, and to summons such evidence as he should deem necessary for his defence. But this intimation was of little use to him; he had no witness to call forth; no friend to exculpate him; no gold to pay for justice; and no advocate that would plead without reward. Yet, as,

“ ——— In adversity,

“ The mind grows strong by buffetting the tempest.” *

de Sevrac, long taught in her disastrous school, now soared above her chastisement. Equally prepared for the vicissitudes of life, or the agonies of death; he entered the tribunal, with a mien, undaunted,

* Rowe,

and

and yet not daring; placid, but not dejected; and while the anxious spectators murmured groans of commiseration, he stood, resigned, patient, and uncomplaining.

His countenance was pale, and his form emaciated by confinement; but his eyes were unclouded with tears, and his limbs unshaken by terror. He advanced to the bar of arraignment, gracefully, obedient, and respectfully serene! though loaded with the obloquy of guilt, he interested every beholder; while the sternest feelings of reproof, softened into the tenderness of pity.

Monsieur Clermont and the peasant, were the first persons called on to give evidence. They related all that had happened in the forest on the night of Ravillon's departure. When the peasant repeated the words of the assassin, de Sevrac shuddered with horror! At that moment
his

his countenance became stern and indignant; his eye, at times, eagerly attentive, at others, mysteriously vacant, as if examining his inward soul.

The next witness was Bazilio Dufanga. He informed the tribunal, that the Marquis had been absent some time from the forest of Montnoir; that Madame de Sevrac, on the day preceding his return, evinced the most violent emotions of anxiety and sorrow: and, that at the close of evening overtaking her, and her daughter, near the outward gates of the chateau, he heard her exclaim, "What a night shall I pass!" Bazilio further added, that it had been her custom, for some time, to wander about, like one unsettled in her reason; and to converse earnestly with her daughter respecting the possibility of concealing treasure.

The *mousqueton* was then produced; Bazilio swore that it was the property of
the

the Marquis, and that it was in his hand, smeared with blood, when he entered the chateau. The officers of justice corroborated his evidence, and proved that they found it on the person of Monsieur de Sevrac; that they traced drops of blood from a thick part of the forest, to the chateau; and that a neckcloth and handkerchief were found in Madame de Sevrac's chamber, both steeped in gore.

The poniard was the next article presented to the tribunal; at the sight of it, the prisoner started aghast! But after a momentary struggle, recovered his fortitude; the trial proceeding, and the following questions were put to the Marquis.—

“Have you any witness to speak in your defence?”

“None.”

“Did

“ Did you not challenge Monsieur Ravillon to meet you in the forest of Mont-noir ? ”

“ I did ; he slandered me ; insulted my poverty ; exposed me to strangers ; and, triumphed in my misfortunes. The laws of honour authorised my resentment. A stranger, poor and unprotected, my only treasure, was my good name ! Ravillon, from his early youth had been my enemy ; he obtained by artifice, and kept by meanness, that part of my paternal fortune, which would have saved me from despair. Not satisfied with the reward of his insidious labour, he solicited my child in marriage with his son Arnaud : I spurned the proposal, and from that period he loathed me. Yet I could have forgiven him, had he been brave enough to avow his indignation ; but the low malice of a coward soul, while it shrunk from open vengeance, basely sought to undermine my reputation : his mean pretext, was jealousy ;

lously; but his private motive, my destruction."

"Do you remember this *mousqueton*?"

"It was mine, I brought it with me from France."

"How long had you quitted Milan, when you were seized at the chateau?"

"Ten hours."

"Where did you pass the night?"

"In the forest of Montnoir; darkness bewildered me; and, being little accustomed to the country, I lost the beaten track and wandered about, uncertain of the road, till morning."

"Do you know this poniard?"

"It was my father's! he used to wear it at the *chasse*."

"It

"It seems to be corroded with rust, that bespeaks a deed of villainy," said the judge.

The Marquis heaved a deep sigh, but made no answer: the appearance of the poniard strongly affected him, and his eyes were fixed upon it, when Madame de Sevrac entered the tribunal. At the sight of her, so pale, changed, and feeble, the Marquis shrunk almost to the earth. She turned her countenance from him, lest a glance of his, should overpower her fortitude. The iron box containing all de Sevrac's little fortune, was next produced. "Then," said the Marquis, clasping his hands, with his eyes raised towards Heaven, "lead us to the scaffold! Protract not our lives to endure the worst of misery; terminate the menaces of poverty, and spare us the agony of procrastinated suffering. I shall answer no farther interrogatories; the little which I have to say, shall be said to my confessor. Weary as I am
of

of the world, and exhausted by persecution, death wears a smiling aspect, and I meet him as a friend. I am accustomed to scenes of blood; the groans of torture, and the supplicating prayers of dying victims, present no new sensations to my mind. I have long meditated self-destruction: the destruction of a darling wife! A beautiful, and unoffending child!"

The agitation of Monsieur de Sevrac's mind when he spoke of objects, so dear, arrested the powers of articulation, and he stood mute and motionless. A sudden ghastliness overspread his countenance, his limbs failed to support him, and he leant feebly against one of his guards. Madame de Sevrac would have snatched him to her bosom, but a bar was placed between them. She stretched forth her arms, but they could not reach him. All the resolution which long solitude had cherished, vanished in this dreadful moment. The Marquis seeing her distraction,

10 and

and dreading that it would unman him, made a signal to his guards, and, with his hands placed before his eyes, was instantly re-conducted to his dungeon.

Sabina, who had been lodged during her father's confinement in the tower where she was placed on the night of her entering the prison, and who had been kept entirely ignorant of the fate of her parents, observed on the evening of the Marquis's trial, several men erecting a scaffold in the court-yard beneath her apartment. After repeated efforts, she made herself heard by one of them; she enquired for whom they were performing the dreadful office, and she was briefly answered, "for the Marquis de Sevrac."

A shriek, which vibrated to the foundation of her prison, burst from her agonized bosom. All the calamities that had till that period weighed upon her heart, seemed trivial in comparison with what

She then suffered. Shut up in a melancholy tower ; separated from her parents, and doomed, in a short interval of time, to behold the dreadful sentence of the law inflicted on a beloved father, she was scarcely capable of thinking : long accustomed to sorrow, and now forever hopeless, she earnestly wished for that death, by which the Marquis was to terminate his sufferings. All the early part of the night was past in the wildness of despair. As the eastern horizon began to brighten, from her small window she contemplated the country which surrounded Milan ; she beheld the distant and majestic summits of the Apennines, breaking through the thin vapours, and catching the first rays of the approaching sun. She heard the busy din of the populace ; the jingling bells for morning prayer, and the more sullen tone of that within the prison, which tolled for the execution of her father.

While she was agonized by the magnitude of her afflictions, a voice, deep and impressive

impressive pronounced her name, and at the same moment a trembling hand presented a folded paper at the opening in the door of her apartment. She sprang towards it, and, looking eagerly through the grating, perceived the figure of a man, who, with a wrapping cloak, carefully concealed his countenance. She snatched the paper and flew to the window, where she read the following lines :

“ If you wish to be free, one who ob-
“ serves and pities your misfortunes, is
“ willing to restore you to liberty. Be
“ ready in half an hour, and the gates
“ will be opened to him, who has both
“ power and inclination to serve you.”

She rushed towards the grating, but the stranger was gone, and she heard his footsteps on the lower stairs of the tower : again she returned to the window which commanded a view of the interior court. In a few minutes she observed one of the jailors, conducting him towards the gate

at the entrance of the prison: the stranger there gave him money, and they parted.

"Mysterious Heaven!" exclaimed Sabina, what can this mean?" she threw herself on her mattress, and a torrent of tears in some measure afforded a transitory relief to her suffering.

The jailor again returned, and informed her, that a stranger wished to hold five minutes conversation with her alone. The message startled her: but, as the magnitude of her sufferings admitted of no augmentation, after a moment's pause, she consented that he should have access to her. Again the man, wrapped in the same disguise, crossed the court-yard, and in a few moments entered her apartment: with caution he fastened the door, and taking her cold and trembling hand, began to explain the motive of his visit.

In a few minutes he observed one of the jailors approaching him, and he said, "Your

“Your parents,” said he, “are condemned to die; the Marquis has not even offered a defence, and another hour will present a scene, that will annihilate your existence! You will behold your father, stretched on the wheel of torture! Your mother a ghastly corpse! Tears and sighs will avail but little: you will only be mocked with reproach, and exposed to the brutality of insult. If you wish to avoid such complicated woes, I will conduct you to a safe asylum, where compassionating friends will comfort and protect you.”

Sabina was almost petrified with wonder. “Let me remain here,” said she, “and perish with my parents: Shall I desert them in their worst hour of trial? shall I basely fly, to secure a life not worth preserving? If you know my parents, Oh! hasten and bear my last prayers to them;” at this moment the death-bell tolled!

After a pause of some moments, “I can stay no longer,” said the stran-

ger. "The citizens are yet busy in their morning avocations: you may pass unnoticed; and when you are once beyond the gates of Milan, no evil can molest you. Instantly decide; if you reject my offer, you will never see me more: you will be left, forlorn and wretched, subject to the licentious violence of a savage crew, who will not regard your sorrows; you will be the victim of their insults; and perhaps, then turned adrift upon the world, friendless and disgraced. Again the deep knell echoed through the prison.

"They come," cried the stranger, "one moment will be too late." Sabina, scarcely knowing what she did, hid her face in the stranger's cloak, and, almost petrified with horror, permitted him to guide her steps down the winding staircase from the tower, and along a dark passage, from whence they came to the outward gate of the prison which opened on

on a spacious meadow in the suburbs of the city.

As she dragged her trembling limbs along, without daring to behold the light; leaning on the shoulder of her guide, and covering her eyes with his cloak, she uttered the most frantic complaints, and called, in the broken accents of inconsolable anguish, on her unfortunate parents. The stranger, unable to silence her distraction, hurried her along close beneath the walls of the prison, at the end of which a carriage was in waiting. On a sudden, a voice exclaimed, "It is my child! she lives! and I shall meet death with resignation!"

Sabina, throwing the veil from her eyes, looked wildly round. "Oh! approach me!" continued the voice; and at the same moment they beheld through the aperture in the prison wall, the beckoning hand of Madame de Sevrac! Sabina
G 4 darted

darted from her companion, and throwing herself on her knees, bathed it with tears. At this interesting moment the jailor entered the cell, and Madame de Sevrac was dragged from the grasp of her shrieking child, who fell senseless on the earth. The stranger, whom the horrors of the scene had rendered desperate, seized Sabina in his arms, and instantly conveyed her to his carriage; the postillions were then ordered to make the best of their way, according to the instructions which they had previously received.

The carriage seemed to fly; the stranger now threw off his cloak, and Sabina discovered, by his dress beneath, that he was a priest. He was a young man, of a graceful and interesting mien; his behaviour was mild, distant, and respectful: every word he uttered was meant to convey consolation, and every look was expressive of sympathy. But Sabina had resigned herself to despair: her tears had ceased

ed to flow, and her complaints were over ; She looked on every object with a vacant senseless eye : her cheek was like the icicle, colourless and cold ; a torpid langour seemed to chill her veins, and she sat, motionless as a statue.

Thus they proceeded till the carriage stopped at the chateau of Montnoir. A faint recollection of what had passed, glanced across her brain, and she beheld the venerable pile, surmounted by its antique towers, with a momentary ray of reason. Jaquilina opened the gates ; the young priest lifted Sabina from the carriage, and assisted in supporting her to a lower apartment ; where after placing her on a sofa, he bowed, and left her. The sight of those objects, which she had so often contemplated in the society of her parents, again awakened the sense of her misfortunes. A torrent of tears, which, while it relieved her anguish, recalled the dreadful remembrance of all that had passed, incessantly

cessantly flowed during the remainder of the day. In the evening, Jaquilina abruptly entered the saloon, and, with that harshness which wounds what it means to cherish, counselled her to "take courage, and to bless Heaven, that she was not involved in the guilt of her father."

Every word she uttered, inflicted new tortures on Sabina's heart. Guilt and de Sevrac, seemed to jar, like a convulsion of nature! All the proud, yet noble sentiments of the Marquis! all the gentle virtues of his wife, seemed to rise in judgment against their accusers.

The broad glare of day subsided, and the tranquil hour of evening approached. Sabina raised her eyes towards the lofty battlements of the chateau, which were illumined by the departing ray. The idea that when the sun rose, her parents were yet living, made her turn from its lustre, and hide her eyes in the pillow of the
sofa.

sosa. Another hour passed : when raising her languid head, she found herself surrounded by a deep and terrifying gloom, that made her start from her seat, fearful and trembling.

She was proceeding towards the door, when her feet were arrested by an indistinct humming in the adjoining apartment. Concluding that it was Jaquilina, in a faint voice, she desired her to bring a lamp, and conduct her to her chamber ; the murmurs ceased, but she received no answer. She then opened the door of the saloon : a sepulchral silence prevailed round the dreary building. She advanced across the court ; the only ray which directed her steps, was that of the rising moon which cast a dim side light over one half the chateau.

Sabina, struck with the peculiar stillness and solemnity of every thing round her, stood for a time motionless, with her eyes

G 6

fixed.

fixed on the immensity of air, illumined by the pale lustre of that planet, which has ever been soothing to romantic minds. The turrets of the chateau were but half whitened with its beams; the other parts were wholly obscure. She looked round, after a pause of contemplation, but not a gleam of light appeared in any of the apartments. A small lamp hung near the door of Jaquilina's den: Sabina proceeded towards it; but on her advancing, the figure of a man darted athwart the long shadows, which the moon, passing behind the towers, threw over the court-yard. It stalked slowly towards the mouldering steps, stopped and then ascended. She saw the form distinctly, for the moon beams fell exactly upon the gallery. He opened the door of the library and entered. Her mind which was already deeply affected by the sufferings of the day, received an additional impression of horror from her situation at that moment. She called several times on Jaquilina, but receiving no
answer,

answer, summoned resolution to explore her apartment.

On entering, she found the miserable woman, busily employed in preparing a supper: her confusion at being discovered was not to be concealed. Sabina took a lamp from the table, after hesitating for some moments, left Jaquilina to pursue her occupation, and was re-crossing the court, when she observed the same figure standing in the gallery. She rushed back, and demanded of Jaquilina who the man was, and what brought him to the chateau. "I entreat," said she, "that you will not let him know of my being here; my sorrows will not bear interruption, and the sight of a stranger would annihilate me." Jaquilina smiled; and Sabina concluding that it was some friend of her's, again traversed the court towards that part of the chateau, which contained her chamber.

She opened the door of the saloon, passed through it, and up the great staircase

case, till she came to a small dressing-room, the first in the suite that led to her apartment. The long windows were open to the floor, and as she stole gently towards the opposite side, she again heard footsteps coming from the library. A sudden agitation seized her, and, putting down her lamp, she approached the window. The man descended the stone steps, and she now discovered, for the first time, that he carried a dark lantern. He crossed the court, and, the moon having risen high, and throwing its vertical beams on the chateau, she plainly perceived him as he entered the saloon, exactly below the window where she stood. She heard his steps on the great stair-case, and alarmed by his approach, snatched up her lamp and flew towards her chamber. He followed; the trembling perturbation with which she ran, and meeting a strong current of air in the spacious apartments, extinguished her light, just at the moment that the man seized her, and exclaimed, "Do you not know me?"

The

The sound of his voice overwhelmed her ; a shriek, which echoed to the battlements of the towers, appalled him ; he let go his hold, and in an instant, she found herself again alone, but she had not the smallest recollection which way he had vanished. She was in total darkness, and so far from Jaquilina, that she despaired of finding her way to her apartment. In a few minutes again a light gleamed towards her, and she was relieved from her distress by the sight of the young priest who had conducted her to the chateau. She flew towards him, and throwing herself on the ground in an agony of tears, entreated him to explain the terrific mystery. He raised her with tenderness and complacency. " It is in your power to be happy," said he, " but you must decide speedily : the son of Monsieur Ravillon, the young and amiable Arnaud, waits but for your consent, to espouse you."

The name of Ravillon was horrible to every feeling of Sabina's heart. " Then
I was

"I was not deceived," exclaimed she, "it was Arnaud who followed me hither." At this moment he entered the chamber.

"Have you communicated my wish?" said he. "I have," replied the priest, "but her grief will not hear of consolation."

"She is not wholly at liberty to decide," said Arnaud, with insulting authority. She would have answered, but the powers of utterance failed, and she was falling to the ground, when the priest caught and supported her.

"Alas! Sir," said he, "I fear this violence will avail but little; if you leave me alone with Mademoiselle de Sevrac, I will endeavour to persuade her."

"We only trifle with time," replied Arnaud, "this is no moment for deliberation; I cannot lose my precious opportunity."

tunity in waiting the decision of a distracted girl; she must consent, or I shall shortly be induced to command; and let her remember, that a favour dearly bought is seldom valued." Sabina turned her eyes on Arnaud, with a melancholy expression, the effect of deep and unutterable sorrow: he availed himself of her silence, and repeatedly urged her to comply: "In a few minutes," said he, "every happiness may be yours: wealth, honour, and splendour await you." Sabina continued to weep. The priest and Arnaud talked aside, and with great vehemence: after much consultation, "I will leave you to try what persuasion can do," said Arnaud. "But recollect," added he, "that another hour may be too late; the mystery will be unravelled, and my purpose defeated." He then quitted the apartment; and the young priest again addressed Mademoiselle de Sevrac.

"Let me conjure you," said he, "let me implore you to decide quickly; events
of

of the greatest importance thicken every moment, and as Monsieur Arnaud is inexorable, you will act wisely in consenting; think, amiable Sabina, think only for a moment that you are in his power; rage and disappointment, may hurry him on to desperation: the violence of his temper will not bear defeat, your fate depends on your compliance."

Roused by this implied menace, she looked sternly at the priest and exclaimed, "He will not dare to murder me."

"Heaven forbid! that so vile an act should enter his imagination," replied the young priest. At this moment Arnaud returned, and with him, entered Bazilio. Sabina's heart was chilled to the centre.— "Then I am lost!" cried she, looking with an imploring countenance towards Heaven. "You may retire," said Arnaud to the priest; he quitted the apartment with a reluctant step, and the door was closed after him.

"Once

"Once more Sabina, I offer you my hand," said Arnaud; she shrunk from him with horror. "Then," continued he, "Bazilio, you know your office."

Before she had time to make any answer, Bazilio caught her in his arms; her senses were nearly overwhelmed, an universal terror rushed through her veins, and she was barely conscious that the ruffian was conveying her across the great court, up the steps to the gallery, and into the library. The recollection of the secret closet, and the mysterious poniard, convinced her that some dreadful event was meditated. Arnaud brought a chair, and commanded Bazilio to place her in it. She had neither strength or courage to expostulate; her whole frame was convulsed and feeble. Frequent and cold drops trickled down her pale cheeks, and she reclined her head on the back of the chair, silent, and prepared for that death, which would at once terminate her life and her misfortunes.

Arnaud

Arnaud, with an insulting smile mocked her terrors, and seemed to derive satisfaction from every agony she suffered. "You must remain here," said he; "I shall return in a few minutes, and Bazilio will guard the door, during my absence." She was once more left alone to ruminate on her situation.

A glimmering light stood on an old oak table at the farthest end of the library. She heard the clock strike twelve; and soon after, the chains of the draw-bridge rattled. Her heart palpitated; but she had not power to rise from the chair where Bazilio had placed her.

She had not long remained in her dreadful state of horror, and suspense, when a confused whispering in the gallery, convinced her that some new plan was concerting. The light still quivered in the socket, and the damp air which was collected in the apartment, surrounded the feeble flame with,

with a mist, which every moment threatened to extinguish it. The idea of darkness filled her mind with fresh alarm, she scarcely breathed, and had not once resolution, even to look towards the secret closet.

The door, which Bazilio guarded, was at a considerable distance from where she sat, and still farther from the light; so that she could have but an imperfect view of any person that might approach. Still she remained motionless, as if chained by some magic power, to the seat, where Arnaud had commanded Bazilio to place her. As the chains of the draw-bridge ceased their clinking noise, she knew that it was let down, but not raised again; which taught her to believe that the visitor meant shortly to depart. Perplexed in the extreme, and worn almost to frenzy by repeated agitation, she waited for the event of the night with the temerity of despair.

The

The buzzing sound of several voices, talking low, near the door, on a sudden having ceased, and the iron latch being gently raised, a form advanced along the obscure side of the library. As it approached the light, she recognized the stern features of its countenance; he stopped and fixed his eyes upon her. "Oh God protect me from that dreadful phantom!" exclaimed Sabina, springing from her chair, and wild with consternation. The figure rushed between her and the door: "You shall not escape," was fiercely uttered, and the sound of the voice convinced her that it was the elder Ravillon. "For whom did my parents perish?" cried Sabina, sinking on a bench that stood near her.

She had not strength to enquire farther into the dreadful mystery; the life-blood almost began to stagnate at her heart; and her eyes glared wildly round, without seeming to observe any particular object.

Upon

Upon a signal being given by Ravillon, Arnaud and the priest returned: they endeavoured to recall her wandering senses; she spoke incoherently; enquired after her parents; suffered Ravillon to raise her from her seat, and with the aid of Arnaud, to lead her into the secret chapel.

“ This spot is consecrated,” said he, “ and dedicated to our saint; here we can perform the ceremony. You may call Bazilio and Jaquilina, as witnesses to the marriage.” Sabina, trembling and exhausted, leant on the arm of the priest; Arnaud left the chapel, to obey his father’s orders.

“ Tell me, Oh! tell me for what my parents perished?” cried Sabina.

“ For having stolen the life of a defenceless traveller,” replied Ravillon.

“ Of whom? Where?” exclaimed Sabina.—“ Oh quickly tell me!”

“ Are

“Are you a stranger to the horrid transaction?” said the priest. “Do you not know, that the Marquis, here in the forest, at midnight, murdered a wretched traveller, and afterwards concealed the body.”

“When?” cried Sabina, almost petrified with amazement.

“Only a few hours, before he was apprehended,” said Ravillon. “The instrument of death was found upon his person, and a part of the victim’s clothes was discovered, stained with blood, in the chamber of your mother.” Sabina shrieked with horror.”

“He lives!” exclaimed she, “The traveller lives! and my parents have died innocent!” Her affliction now set all consolation at defiance. She raved incessantly; called on her ill-fated father, and invoked the vengeance of Heaven on his inhuman judges. “Lead me to the tribunal,”

tribunal," said she, in a paroxysm of despair, "There let me utter the curses of an orphaned child; there let me tell the monsters who condemned them, that they have destroyed a defenceless family."

"They had proofs of their guilt," said Ravillon.

"Presumptive proofs!" cried Sabina. "Oh! if the laws are to be swayed by appearances, where, where can innocence fly from destruction?—Apprehended on suspicion; imprisoned without even knowing of what he was accused; and condemned, without a proof of criminality! Why, why did I not perish with him?"

"Your father," replied Ravillon, "deserved his fate: born and educated in the court of a despot; he had, from his infancy mocked the sufferings of the people. He beheld, without pity, the tortures of oppression inflicted on those, who had courage

to complain; and heard, without remorse, the last sigh of exhausted fortitude."

Sabina continued weeping torrents of tears. "He never injured the unfortunate," said she—

"But he upheld those who did," replied Ravillon, "He enjoyed the sunshine of that sphere which dazzled round the base, while its beams were withheld from the virtuous. He knew, that millions groaned under oppression, and yet he revelled amidst the spoils, wrung from their afflicted hearts."

"Oh! name it not!" interrupted Sabina, "I am already doomed to anguish; seek not to augment my sorrows."

Arnaud now returned with Bazilio and Jaquilina. "Sabina," said Monsieur Ravillon, "you must either instantly permit the marriage to be solemnized, or you must

must accompany me to a distant part of the forest; where I have a small house, ready to receive you, till you are disposed to compliance.

"To-morrow I will quit the chateau," answered Sabina, "all places are now alike to me."

"To-morrow will be too late," said Ravillon, "you must instantly decide.—It will soon be day, and I am weary with trifling." There was a degree of trepidation in his manner, and a tremulous tone in his voice, that convinced Sabina of her danger; the flame which had long only quivered in the socket, on a sudden ceased to glimmer, and the pale blue light of day-break, entered the latticed window. Ravillon started when he saw it, and in a few words informed Sabina, that she must depart immediately with him; that all resistance would be useless; that reasons of importance compelled him to be violent; and,

that having failed in persuasive, he was determined to adopt compulsive measures.

At the conclusion of this menace, he seized her arm, and forced her to quit the chapel; it was in vain that she entreated to be heard; in vain that she shrieked for pity; he dragged her along the library, and into the gallery, where, scarcely visible by the faint light, the feeble form of Madame de Sevrac advanced towards them!

Sabina rushing forward, exclaimed, "It is my mother!" Ravillon, aghast with horror, let go her arm, and instantly escaped.

CHAP. V.

" Now dare not I scarce tread to my own hearing,
 " Left echo borrow superstition's tongue,
 " And seem to answer me like one departed."

HORACE WALFOLE.

RAVILLON, disappointed in his views, and surprised at a moment of such importance to their accomplishment, instantly set out for Milan. He had wound his mind up to the highest pitch of infamy, and the interest which he felt in the cause he had undertaken, tended much to augment the chagrin of disappointment. Rage and despair wrung his soul to agony; but Ravillon, with all his vices, wanted that calm resolution which is absolutely requisite for the accomplishment of every enterprise, whether good or bad, that leads the adventurous spirit out of the common tract of life: he was cruel,

but not brave; vindictive, but not firm; restless when foiled in his designs, and only daring, in proportion as he was successful.

As he traversed the gloomy avenues of the forest, the image of Madame de Sevrac seemed to pursue him. Superstition, which is commonly the associate of weak minds, created new horrors, and while he panted for revenge, he shrunk from the phantoms of his own imagination. He had long cherished in his mind a secret, which contaminated the few qualities which nature had not marked with her blackest impression; that secret, and a combination of circumstances which prevented Ravillon's revealing it, preyed on his mind, as subterraneous fires augment, only to burst forth with accumulated fury. He had received a blow from de Sevrac; his proposal, in favour of his son Arnaud, had been rejected with contempt; he had falsely assumed, what the world calls, a degree

degree of personal consequence, by boasting an alliance of blood with the Marquis's family; and the name of de Sevrac had long been hateful to him; prejudice, which grows like an unwholesome weed, has only truth and humanity for its antidotes; these were not the characteristics of Ravillon's mind.

The dawn was obscured with clouds, which, before he had proceeded a mile, gathered into a tempest. Ravillon was one of those self-important mortals, who fancy, that all the powers of nature interest themselves, in whatever the mere effect of chance produces on their feelings; the tremendous peals of thunder, which rolled over the forest, he considered as the reproofing voice of Omnipotence; and the livid flashes, that darted amidst the branches, as the menacing arrows of Supreme indignation.

As he crossed the narrow vistas, the lightning, at short intervals, discovered

more clearly than the brightest dawn could have done, either the thick labyrinths in every direction, or some low cross planted in the path side as a memento of a murder. The horse which Ravillon endeavoured to guide, participated in the terrors of his master, and neither violent nor gentle means could induce him to continue his journey.

The tempest raged every moment with augmented fury, the sky was entirely overcast, the rain poured in columns, and the path which Ravillon had taken across the thickest part of the forest, was scarcely discernible. Impelled by despair, he leaped from his horse, whose hoofs seemed rooted in the turf, and, tying him to a tree, proceeded on foot towards the nearest post-house.

He had not advanced twenty paces, when, between the shrill gusts of wind which almost tore the tallest trees from
their

their foil, he heard the clinking of chains : he started ; his blood almost congealed ; he listened ; the sound at intervals returned, and was as regularly over-powered by the howling of the storm. At length he arrived at the post-house ; the master was yet sleeping, but the name of his guest roused him, and he descended.

A fire was kindled, and refreshments set before him, but Ravillon's mind was too deeply engaged to admit of his observing the alacrity of his host. Fuel was added to the embers that were heaped upon the hearth ; Ravillon leant feebly against the wall ; a chair was instantly placed near him. A peal of thunder shook the house to its foundation ; " God have mercy on the guilty ! " exclaimed the host crossing his breast.

Ravillon started—

The tempest continued :—The volleying hail pelted the windows, and the search-

ing lightning predominated over the bright blaze of the wood fire. The refreshment remained untasted; and the host, astonished at seeing Ravillon alone, and on foot, became earnest to develop the cause. He addressed several half phrases, and uttered many ejaculations, without exciting the smallest attention from his guest; the solemn gloom of whose countenance augmented his impatience, and determined him to gratify his curiosity, which was become insupportable.

"We have had a dreadful storm Signor!" said the host. "I don't remember such another since the night that the old Marquis died; when sheets of fire flew over the towers of the chateau, and the continued thunder made the old ramparts tremble."

"'Tis false," said Ravillon hastily.—

"As I hope for salvation, it is true, Signor," said the host.—"The forest shook, and

and the birds hovered in the air, as though they were hunted by the devil. The villagers could not help thinking—

“What?” cried Ravillon, seizing the host by the collar.

“That it was ominous,” answered he trembling.

“Superstitious knaves!” said Ravillon, with a ghastly smile, pushing the terrified host at the same time from him, “beware how you repeat such tales, they will only scare the peasantry, without discovering any thing.”

“What is there to discover Signor?” enquired the host earnestly.

Ravillon walked hastily to and fro—

“The mysterious ways of Heaven!” said he, pressing his hand to his forehead, and quickening his pace. He then enquired

who had changed horses there during the night?

"Don't you know Signor?" cried the host, eager to embrace an opportunity of changing the subject; "Why the Marquis de Sevrac, with Madame, and the young Englishman who was wounded in the forest some time since: a brave Signor, as ever the sun shone on! Thank the blessed Virgin they are alive and well; I wish that all hands were as free from blood as those of the poor Marquis." Ravillon rose from the chair where he had just seated himself, and swallowing a large draught of wine, enquired of the host whether he had heard the particulars of the Marquis's escape?—A second glass of wine was hastily swallowed.—Ravillon returned to his seat, and the host resumed his conversation.

"You shall have the account, word for word, as the Englishman's servant related it;

it; the wounds which his master received from some damned and bloody minded villain near the chateau." Ravillon replenished his glass, and the host continued—

"Owing, most likely, to neglect, and the speed with which he travelled, brought on a fever, and by the time that he arrived at Bologna, obliged him to call in the assistance of a skillful surgeon. During his confinement there, the news reached him, that the Marquis de Sevrac, was apprehended and accused of having assassinated a person in the forest of Montnoir. Upon hearing this, the Englishman instantly, in defiance of his surgeon's opinion, and at the hazard of his life, set out for Milan."

"I know thus far," said Monsieur Ravillon. "I overtook him on the road, the day before yesterday, his purpose was made public to every traveller, by his eager enquiries

enquiries respecting de Sevrac. My servant gave me this information. I communicated it to my son, by express, and hastened to the chateau to receive the Marquis."

"Are you going thither Signor?" enquired the host: Ravillon made no reply, and the narrative continued.

"By a rapid journey, day and night, the Englishman yesterday arrived at Milan on the hour appointed for Monsieur de Sevrac's execution. On demanding a sight of the criminal, he was informed, that he was then at prayers with his confessor. But that he might wait in the prison court, where the Marquis was to suffer death. The dreadful moment came when he was brought forth; he was resigned and composed! The people who stood near the scaffold pitied him; and the executioner himself shed tears."

"Well,

"Well, well, be brief," said Ravillon hastily—His host continued—

"The Marquis bowed to the spectators, embraced his confessor, looked wishfully towards Heaven, recommended his soul to God, and seemed to forget this world entirely. At this moment the stranger rushing amidst the guards, exclaimed, "He is innocent! I am the person who was supposed to have been murdered; I was wounded, but not by the prisoner."

As he pronounced these words, Madame de Sevrac was led forth to the scaffold; at the sight of the Englishman she shrieked and fainted; a courier at this moment, entered the prison court, with intelligence that he had overtaken a messenger who travelled express from Monsieur Ravillon to his son. The consternation became universal, the Marquis and Madame were remanded to their dungeons, and a council of the tribunal assembled. The Englishman and his servant, proved the hour
and

and place when the latter was stabbed in the forest ; the messenger swore that he saw Monsieur Ravillon alive only three days since, and produced a letter with his arms on the seal, and his hand writing on the superscription, both of which were recognized by several members of the tribunal. The Marquis was summoned to appear, had his property restored to him, and was pronounced, not guilty.

“ The Englishman then demanded to hear the proofs which had tended to criminate Monsieur de Sevrac ; he confessed that the handkerchief and neckcloth were his ; told the tribunal of the kindness with which he was treated at the chateau, by Madame ; disavowed all knowledge of the jewels, and the poniard, which was discovered in the private chapel ; and took a solemn oath, that the person and voice of the man, from whose hand he received his wounds, were wholly unlike those of the Marquis de Sevrac.”

“ Had

"Had he observed the assassin so minutely?" said Ravillon.

"In truth he had," replied the host: "And, what is more, he declared before the judge and the tribunal, that in any part of the globe, he should know him amongst a million!"

"Indeed!" said Ravillon, "and does he mean to take steps for his detection."

"I hope he does," replied the postmaster, "and who can tell Signor, but we may live to see his bones whiten in the sun, upon the borders of our forest. I don't know what you think Signor," continued he, "but I should feel no more remorse in shooting such a miscreant, than in butchering a wolf. I dare be sworn it was not his first transgression."

"The laws are made for the punishment of criminals," said Monsieur Ravillon.

"Yes,

“ Yes, and those laws would have put the innocent Marquis and his wife to death,” replied the post-master. “ Suspicion now falls on another person,”—Ravillon started.—“ On the old Abbé, who came with them from France, and, who perhaps is also innocent, though I must own that his absconding wears but an ugly aspect.” Ravillon smiled and seemed to feel satisfaction in hearing this last piece of intelligence; then suddenly enquired whether his horse had been found.

“ Found, Signor! Yes;” answered the host “but it was no wonder that the poor beast would not go on, few living things have courage to pass the gibbet where the murderer hangs in chains, on the western skirts of the forest.”

“The murderer!” cried Ravillon. “Was I so near that horrid spot? Then I can account for the clinking noise which I heard at intervals, during the storm.”

They

They proceeded towards the door of the post-house.

"'Tis a solitary place to be sure," said the post-master, "but I hope it will have more company, when the villain who endangered the life of the good Marquis, is hanged there." Ravillon paused as he placed his foot in the stirrup—drew it back, looked earnestly at the post-master, then mounted his horse, and turned from the door without uttering a syllable.

The tempest had wholly ceased, and the sun rose, as Monsieur Ravillon quitted an avenue which led to the high road. An extensive plain abruptly opened to his view, rich in a variety of beauties, and refreshed by the copious showers that had fallen at day-break. On every side foaming torrents rushed from the sloping vineyards, while the broad spreading branches that fringed the outline of the wood, continued to sprinkle the sandy soil, which bore innumerable tracks of frequent travellers.

In

In the evening Monsieur Ravillon reached Milan, where he received complete confirmation of the Marquis's innocence, which was still more strongly demonstrated by his appearance. Every tongue was busied in congratulation for his return; while an universal curiosity filled the public mind, to know, where he had been during the confinement and trial of de Sevrac. To satisfy these enquiries, Ravillon informed his friends, that, driven to despair by the departure of Signora Paulina, he had followed the Count Monteleoni on his route towards Florence: and shortly overtaking their suite, had accompanied them thither. He declared that he was wholly unacquainted with what was then passing at Milan; but that finding La Signora Paulina still averse to his wishes, he determined to set out for the forest of Montnoir, in order to answer the challenge of the Marquis.

This tale was believed by the powerful; and the poor dared not avow their incredulity.

dulity. Monsieur Ravillon was too prosperous to be suspected of baseness, and every bearer, (for he only repeated the story to his intimate associates) rejoiced in his having baffled the vindictive spirit of the ungrateful exile.

Monsieur Ravillon, for a variety of reasons determined on instantly removing the Marquis and his family from the chateau. He considered their poverty as a source that would create a general interest, which, if not relieved by him, would encrease to a torrent of discontent: he reflected, that though it might not become powerful enough to overwhelm him, its low and deep murmurs would interrupt his repose. He therefore dispatched a letter to the Marquis commanding him instantly to depart; alledging as a cause for this new act of persecution, that he could neither countenance or acknowledge a man, who had been once stigmatized with the name of an assassin.

The

The Marquis, who had never seen Ravillon since the day that he had challenged him, received the letter with calm and dignified contempt. Madame de Sevrac and Sabina were present when it was delivered to him. Their minds so recently awakened from a dream of despair were timidly susceptible of every threatening misfortune. The countenance of de Sevrac was the unerring tablet of his thoughts; the stern emotion which at first evinced itself, and the indignant smile which succeeded, declared the letter to be of no small importance. He read it to his wife and daughter; the idea of being driven from their asylum affected them but little in comparison with the stigma which Ravillon had cast upon the name of the Marquis.

Sabina, dreading to involve her father in a new quarrel with Monsieur Ravillon, had never mentioned the treatment she received on the night of his return to the chateau.

teau. She knew that the original cause of their former enmity, was the proposal which had been made respecting Arnaud; and, as her own mind was decided on the matter, she deemed it unnecessary to irritate her father's, lest it might again endanger a life so precious, and so recently rescued from destruction.

The Marquis read the letter over and over; all the pride of his soul seemed up in arms against his dastardly enemy. Madame de Sevrac clasped him to her bosom, entreated him to be calm, and to combat the violence of his resentment; while Sabina knelt before him, imploring Heaven to strengthen his mind with persevering fortitude; at this moment St. Clair entered the saloon. Astonished at beholding so extraordinary a group, he again receded towards the door. The Marquis endeavoured to suppress his feelings, and turning from Madame de Sevrac accosted St. Clair with affected indifference, spoke
of

of remote subjects, and, taking his arm, led him out of the saloon.

They entered the forest; the Marquis endeavoured to smile, but St. Clair plainly perceived the agitation which was thinly concealed under an affected composure; they had not proceeded far, when Monsieur Ravillon's messenger overtook them, and insolently demanded an answer to the letter: Madame de Sevrac and Sabina joining them, the Marquis briefly bid the servant follow him, and leaving his wife and daughter to the protection of St. Clair, returned to the chateau.

Their eyes followed him till he crossed the draw-bridge. He walked hastily, and the messenger kept pace with him. The interchanging looks of Madame de Sevrac and her daughter; their silence, as they watched the Marquis; and the penetrating sigh as he entered the gates, bespoke a more than common interest in the business which

which occupied him. "Forgive me Madam," cried St. Clair, "if I press too earnestly for an explanation, which my recent acquaintance with your husband will scarcely authorise: but there is a mystery to which I am unfortunately a stranger; the sympathy which your persecution has awakened, will not suffer me to remain silent." Madame de Sevrac's confusion encreased every moment.

"I cannot forget," continued St. Clair, "the hospitality which rescued me from destruction; I cannot obliterate from my memory, the hour, when, wounded and nearly exhausted, I was received and restored beneath the roof of the Marquis de Sevrac."

"Of Monsieur Ravillon:" replied Madame de Sevrac, "we are but fugitives; my husband is an exile, whose proud but honourable mind, sickens under the humiliations to which it is exposed. Driven
VOL. I. I from

from his native country, to avoid the horrors of a scaffold, fate pointed out this forest as his last asylum. But even here, we are not permitted to enjoy repose; the man, whose fortune was built, upon the ruin of my husband's, has commanded us to quit the chateau; and to-morrow we depart." A shower of tears prevented her proceeding.

" Shall I go to this Ravillon; shall I represent the inhumanity of his conduct?" said St. Clair.

" Not for the universe," interrupted Sabina, " I know that my father's soul would shrink from the idea of solicitation; nay more, that he would rather perish, than receive a favour, from a wretch, who has had the temerity to insult him."

The messenger now repassed the draw-bridge on horseback; he hastened across the forest; and the Marquis returned to his party.

" Well

"Well, my Hubert," said Madame de Sevrac, with enquiring tenderness, "have you decided?"

"I have," replied he, "and early in the morning we must absolutely leave the chateau." His countenance was enlivened, as though a weighty load was taken from his heart: he smiled, talked gayly, and they continued to stroll about till the evening began to close.

The air was serene, and the light breezes that passed over the landscape were enchantingly refreshing. Sabina proposed supping on the long terrace to which several apartments opened. The Marquis, his spirits being greatly restored, seconded her wish, and they all eagerly assisted in arranging the table. St. Clair, who had never visited the upper part of the chateau, was particularly delighted with the surrounding scenery. To the right, the Apennines seemed to pierce the sky, which threw on their

white peaks the collected vapours of the day; while, on the left, the moon rose above the sombre foliage of a distant wood, its pale beams beautifully contrasting the warm lustre of the western horizon. The birds still hovered in circling mazes, over the dark towers of the chateau, as if unwilling to quit the luxuriant expanse while its attractions were yet visible; and the south wind descending gently from the Apennines, scarcely ruffled the trees round the venerable ramparts.

Mademoiselle de Sevrac, after supper played several sweet melodies, on an old but finely toned mandolin; St. Clair was enraptured! Every pulse of his heart beat in unison with the tones of the instrument; her soul seemed to speak, as she struck the chords; and her countenance was more beautifully expressive than ever St. Clair had before seen it. There are moments, in which that something, which custom has termed sympathy, but which truth must

must denominate nature, will unfold the genuine affections of the heart, in spite of all our endeavours to conceal them; and if there be a power which is calculated, beyond all others, to draw forth that graceful weakness, that undescribable charm, which shews the human mind in all its softest attractions, it is certainly Music. The human voice acquires something celestial, when tutored to the strains of harmony; all the grosser parts of our natures seem to refine by the vibration of sweet sounds, and the Being, blest with that soul-seducing power, while it is exercised, resembles an immortal!

It was near ten o'clock when the party separated: they immediately retired to rest. Those who have beheld such objects as Sabina, and whose sensibility equals that of St. Clair, will easily conceive that this night was passed in rumination. The virtues, the graces, the ingenuous mind of Mademoiselle de Sevrac, awakened that

fort of affection, which pretended stoics would denominate, pity; but which is, in fact, the irresistible impulse, the electric attraction, against which the heart has no safeguard. The family of de Sevrac, fallen from their dazzling eminence, evinced no diminution of mental splendour: Sabina was worthy of St. Clair's affections, but there were obstacles which would render the possession of them dangerous, if not fatal.

An hour before the dawn appeared, the Marquis and Madame de Sevrac rose to prepare for their journey. Sabina awakened by the bustle in their chamber, dressed herself and hastened to assist them. She found her father busily engaged in writing, with several letters lying before him directed for Paris. Madame de Sevrac was employed in packing up their little wardrobe, for the whole of which one small trunk was sufficiently spacious. The Marquis, when he had finished his writing, opened the case
of

of jewels, and looked at them for some minutes, as if calculating their value. He then pressed his forehead, cast a side glance at Madame de Sevrac, and, shuddering, closed it.

Horses had been ordered from the post-house, on the preceding evening, and the fugitives waited in momentary expectation of their arrival, yet no plan had been decided on respecting their future destination; condemned again to wander, without friends, without a home, and exposed to that unfeeling obloquy which degenerate minds attach to those, who have been marked even by a false accusation, the Marquis had not resolution to speak on the subject. He had been supposed guilty of homicide; he had borne all the agonies of insult, all the miseries of a barbarous captivity; he had been ranked with the most atrocious felons; tried on presumptive proofs, and, though no positive crime had been brought home to him, unable to produce evidence

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that

that might exonerate him from the charge: he knew that appearances were strongly against him; and, weary of a life which seemed devoted to anguish, he had patiently resigned himself to an ignominious grave, as the only asylum from a scene of persecution! Yet, in this rashly-thinking world, in this vast tribunal, where all pretend to judge, and all are liable to judgment; there are men, whose uncharitable natures would have stigmatized the name of de Sevrac; and considered his blood as a small expiation for crimes, of which he had never been proved guilty.

While they waited for the post-horses their task of preparation being at an end, Madame de Sevrac, with a voice gentle and soothing, enquired of the Marquis, what route he intended to take, and ventured to express her wish that they might proceed to Leghorn, and from thence embark for England. "Our misfortunes cannot have travelled so far," said she.

"Calumny

"Calumny is a swift fiend," answered the Marquis. "It seldom loses sight of prey which it has once marked for destruction."

"But your innocence was proved, my Hubert," replied Madame de Sevrac. "The tribunal of justice, should be the ordeal to ascertain the omnipotence of truth; and we should hope that the fangs of malice never can penetrate the shield of innocence, while reason predominates over the prejudices of opinion."

"I," said de Sevrac, "who while breathing the contaminating atmosphere of Versailles; I, who, the companion of sycophants, flourished like a plant beneath the false lustre of a deceptive sphere, yet preserved a name unspotted; to become the victim of appearances, in the obscure asylum of poverty; can I remember it and not wonder? Why was I the idol of the court, the being, around whom prosperity
15 smiled,

smiled, and honours accumulated even to satiety?"

"Because," replied Madame de Sevrac, "you were placed on an eminence whose brightness dazzled your own eyes, and whose height placed you beyond the scrutiny of the multitude. It was not to your virtues that the crowd paid homage; it was to your power, your influence, your situation! Knaves and idiots received an equal portion of adulation with yourself; and if calumny never assailed your name, it was, because her tongue was silenced by fear."

Madame de Sevrac was interrupted by the clacking of the postillion's whip, as he advanced towards the chateau: she opened her window, and saw the horses near the outward gate. They immediately descended to the saloon and took a short breakfast while the carriage was getting ready.

The

The old cabriolet which was in a tattered condition when the Marquis purchased it, now wore, indeed a miserable aspect; moth-eaten and covered with blue mildew which had been collected by standing in a damp shed, where Bazilio had placed it on the evening of their arrival. It exhibited a melancholy theme for contemplation to the philosophic mind, and a striking sample of the instability of human greatness! It was now the only conveyance of a once rich, and powerful family! The gilded carriage, emblazoned and adorned with all the trappings of nobility; the lengthening cavalcade, horses gayly caparisoned, and couriers richly dressed, were now succeeded by a shattered vehicle, and a pair of lean wretched animals, harnessed with cords, and guided by a churlish boor, whose unskillful hand would every moment endanger the lives of the travellers.

It was at this trying juncture that the whole family most severely felt the absence

sence of the Abbé Le Blanc: so wise a counsellor, and so kind a friend was not easily forgotten. In the plenitude of prosperity, when the heart is all gladness, as one associate recedes, another advances; but where all is gloomy poverty and sorrow, the loss of a faithful companion is irreparable! The gay parterre is not less gaudy by the decay of a single flower; but on a barren waste the smallest weed is an object of decoration.

CHAP. VI.

“ The various lot of life

“ Oft’ from external circumstance assumes

“ A moment’s disposition to rejoice

“ In those delights, which at a diff’rent hour

“ Would pass unheeded.”

AKENSIDE.

EVERY thing being ready, the Marquis led his wife towards the gate of the chateau, while St. Clair took the hand of Sabina. As they crossed the draw-bridge, de Sevrac looking wistfully back, exclaimed with a deep sigh, “ Farewell for ever! habitation of my ancestors, where the ashes of my parents sleep, I shall visit you no more!” When they approached the miserable vehicle in which they purposed recommencing their pilgrimage, Madame de Sevrac smiled; St. Clair let down the step; Sabina’s eyes were fixed on the ground, while a faint blush of confusion over-

overspread her countenance. Their little trunk was placed before the *cabriolet*, "Are you certain my Hubert, that it is safely corded?" said Madame de Sevrac with a mixture of tenderness and anxiety; the Marquis again examined the fastenings, and assured her that all was perfectly secure.

They had taken leave of St. Clair before they quitted the saloon; every thing had been said that gratitude could prompt, and more than generosity would wish to hear; yet a pause of a minute, while each looked earnestly at the other, seemed to indicate that there was something still to say. The Marquis again shook the hand of St. Clair; again he bade him farewell; and a silent tear stole down Sabina's cheek, while Madame de Sevrac raised her foot to the step of the *cabriolet*.

"Yet stay a moment," said St. Clair, "I cannot suffer you to depart in such an incon-

inconvenient vehicle, while I have the power to offer you better accommodation. I have an English carriage which will better suit Madame de Sevrac and her daughter; my route lies towards Tuscany, and I entreat that you will permit me to be the companion of your journey." Madame de Sevrac withdrew her foot from the step of the *cabriolet*; she said nothing, but her manner was expressive of her wish that the proposal might be accepted.

"I hope," continued St. Clair, "that Madame de Sevrac will honour me by approving the suggestion: Will you," addressing Sabina, "will you second my wishes? I am an entire stranger to the country through which I am destined to proceed; and it will be fortunate indeed for me, if I can travel in such society." After some hesitation, many entreaties on the part of St. Clair, and as many excuses on that of the Marquis and his family; Madame de Sevrac and her daughter, were prevailed

prevailed on to enter the English carriage; St. Clair and the Marquis seated themselves on the box, which was constructed for travelling, and the valet de chambre took possession of the deserted cabriolet. The smile of satisfaction was depicted on every countenance, and the family of the Marquis experienced more calm and mutual pleasure at that moment, than they had done at any period since their escape from Paris.

Thus they proceeded on their journey till they came within sight of Milan; when a sensation of horror rushed through every bosom, as they passed the black towers of the prison where they had endured such agonizing affliction.

The day's route was terminated at sunset. The place where they had decided to sleep, was situated at the entrance of a village, where the first object, and the most important, was the *auberge*, (or post-house) command-

commanding a green level of considerable length, on which a large group had assembled to dance and sing, and to close the day cheerfully. Madame de Sevrac and Sabina walked towards the multitude, while the Marquis and St. Clair ordered supper, and selected the apartments: the boisterous mirth of the rustics delighted Sabina, who had never till that moment beheld so happy an assembly. The Marquis and St. Clair soon followed; and the latter taking Sabina's hand led her to the top of the dance, while her father and Madame de Sevrac looked on, commending the rustic graces of the females, and applauding the gallantry of their simple partners.

Never did Mademoiselle de Sevrac's heart feel such a sensation as that which it experienced when she was led down the dance by St. Clair. She blushed, she was bewildered; and, the more she apologized for her awkwardness, the more did she discover

cover her confusion; twilight closed; and the rustic revelry was, for that night, at an end. The Marquis and Madame de Sevrac had walked back to the auberge, and Sabina was consigned to the protection of her partner. As they returned through the village, St. Clair informed Sabina, after some hesitation, and with much embarrassment, that he had a letter of the most extraordinary tendency, which he had in vain sought for an opportunity of delivering into her hands: he assured her that its contents had made a strong impression on his mind; and, that had there not been something peculiarly mysterious in every line, he should not have been so anxious to disclose it.

Mademoiselle de Sevrac's curiosity was awakened, and she requested, if the letter was in any respect connected with her interest or that of her parents, that it may not be kept from their knowledge; St. Clair's manner convinced her, that it was
of

of the most serious importance; he conjured Sabina to reflect, before she revealed the matter to the Marquis; and to prepare herself for an event, the most extraordinary and mysterious. She promised to read with fortitude, and to act with caution. The Marquis who came to seek after them, interrupted the conversation, Sabina had only time to conceal the letter, and they returned together to their lodging, where Madame de Sevrac waited to receive them.

During supper they were attended by the mistress of the auberge. She was a woman possessed of one invaluable quality for the station in which fortune had placed her; an untiring loquacity. She knew the secret anecdotes of every habitation, from the chateau to the hovel, within ten posts of Milan. The gallantries of the nobles, and the less subtle amours of the rustics were objects of her animadversion; in a long spun theme of sorrow, she was indefatigable;

defatigable ; and the broad latitude of a merry tale, never lost a trait of its pleasantry by her method of recital.

The Marquis, who had travelled much, and who had not travelled in vain, knew, that to acquire universal knowledge in passing through different countries, the observer should see all ; hear much ; and converse with every body ; he therefore did not let his hostess remain long in a state of constrained taciturnity. The luxuriance of the country, the splendours of the nobles, and the frank honesty of the poor rustics, for a time furnished subjects for conversation. But the hostess had yet a theme, on which she languished to expatiate ; a theme, the most interesting, the most dear to her heart, and on which she could with exemplary perseverance, talk eternally. That subject was—herself ! The Marquis knew human nature too well, to hope, that when a woman is resolved to assert the privilege of her sex, any mortal power

power can prevent her; therefore, relinquishing the idea of being heard, he wisely adopted the more practicable task of hearing. First, she began by extolling the good management of her house; secondly by remarking the extreme satisfaction which travellers always evinced at leaving it, (a simple fact which none of her auditors questioned), but, what was not altogether quite so certain, the great moderation with which she charged her guests, was the third topic of liberal panegyric.

“Not for the want of money,” said she, “but, for the quiet of conscience, I make it a rule never to be extortionate; there are four ranks of travellers by whom I never could find the heart to make money. I deal kindly with the nobles, because they do credit to my house; with the poor, because it gives one a lift towards heaven; with bachelors, for the hope
of

of a husband; and with priests, for the good of my soul."

"You are a widow, I presume?" said Madame de Sevrac.

"God forbid," said the hostess dropping a curtsy and sighing. "I always told my *bon homme* that I should never be able to endure a state of widowhood. He knew that I spoke truth, and resolved to prevent it."

"How was that possible?" said the Marquis.

"Why Monseigneur," replied the hostess, "seeing that I could not bear a state of widowhood, he thought that the surest way to prevent the misfortune, was never to become a wife: so we agreed to go halves in the good gifts of Providence, and to leave the survivor the produce of our labour."

"Yet

"Yet you talked of your courtesy towards bachelors in hopes of getting a husband," said Madame de Sevrac; "is there not something of contradiction in your sentiments?"

"Nothing like it," replied the hostess, "for though I once thought I could not bear the loss of a husband, I now think otherwise, and I dare swear you are of my opinion, though you are rich and noble."

Madame de Sevrac smiled, and the hostess continued—

"Happiness does not always follow riches; I once lived with as great a *Seigneur* as any in France, and all his wealth could not keep him above ground. 'Twas a sad piece of work. The wicked one was busy, and nothing could save him. I shall not soon forget it! He has never rested in his grave, nor I in my bed, since it happened.

I would

I would not have continued at the chateau for all the Pope's treasures."

"At what chateau?" said Madame de Sevrac.

"At the chateau of Montnoir," replied the hostess. "Heaven rest his soul, for his bones have never known quiet."

"Why do you think so?" said the Marquis eagerly.

"Because he died by his own hands," answered the hostess, "and was buried in the chateau. The matter was hushed up, and is unknown to this day."

"Were you at the forest when he expired?" cried Monsieur de Sevrac.

"No; I was sent the day before to Milan, with the young child of Monsieur Ravillon,

Ravillon, who was the Marquis's adopted heir; for his own son had offended him by marrying a heretic; so that he not only lost his father's estate but his soul into the bargain! But that was nothing; as I was saying, I left him alive and merry; and when I came back, he had betaken himself into the vault under the chapel."

The Marquis was deeply occupied in thought: a thousand strange and horrible ideas thronged upon his mind. After a long pause, during which the marked expression of his countenance, awed the hostess into silence—he again addressed her:

"Did you see the body of the Marquis, after his decease?"

"Jesu forbid!!" answered she, looking over her shoulder as though his shade were at her elbow.

"Then how can you pretend to stigmatize his memory with the crime of suicide?" said the Marquis sternly. "Have a care"—

He was interrupted by a loud shriek, from the affrighted hostess, who began to cross her forehead and her bosom with breathless terror.

"I see it clearly!" said the Marquis to himself. The hostess fell on her knees, hid her eyes beneath her apron, and continued praying and trembling more violently than ever.

St. Clair raised her from the posture of supplication, into which she had thrown herself, and her spirits being somewhat revived by a glass of *bon vin*, she ventured to resume the dreadful subject of conversation; first looking round with an eye of terror and suspicion.

"To be sure he made a fine end," said she sobbing, "He was at prayers when he killed

killed himself; what could he do better when he was going from this wicked world to the other? Monsieur Ravillon took it sadly to heart and moped, and was not himself for many a day after it happened; and from that hour, the north wing of the chateau has been shut up, as though it were infested with an evil spirit. There was some talk about laying it in the Red Sea, and praying the devil out of the chateau, but it was a dangerous matter to meddle with nobility."

Madame de Sevrac could not suppress a smile at the comments of the superstitious hostess. But the Marquis was pensive and wholly absorbed in a new and extraordinary source of rumination. St. Clair rose to depart, and the affrighted hostess eagerly availed herself of the opportunity to quit the room under his protection. Monsieur de Sevrac continued walking hastily to and fro in the apartment.

Sabina was eager to retire; the letter which St. Clair had given with such impressive caution, excited her curiosity, and after taking leave of the Marquis and her mother, she hastened to her chamber. There again she found the loquacious hostess, who waited to offer her services: Sabina requested her to leave a night-lamp, and to depart.

The sound of her father's voice in the adjoining chamber checked her curiosity, and she resolved not to open the letter till the auberge was perfectly quiet. She looked at it several times: it was sealed, and on the cover was written, "Open this when you are alone, and secure from interruption." Sabina examined her chamber door and found that it had no other fastening, than a small bolt which the slightest pressure would easily remove.

The Marquis continued to speak with an agitated tone to Madame de Sevrac.

She

She had told him the story of finding the poniard, before they quitted the forest of Montnoir. A part of the mystery seemed now to be elucidated, but the proofs were still indefinite, and rather tended to set the imagination at work, than to confirm the reflections of reason. Yet enough of equivocal light had darted athwart the senses of de Sevrac to present phantoms, which would never rest; the certitude of the most dreadful events after the first shock is over, fixes on the mind one dark, still, and melancholy shade; but suspicion awakened, and not convinced, is eternally busy; what it fears, it believes; it magnifies present ills, and anticipates circumstances which only augment its inquietude, with an obstinate perseverance in every thing that can exclude hope, and set reason at defiance.

The talkative hostess had, by one unguarded discovery, made in the simplicity of her heart, awakened a thousand busy de-

means to torment the Marquis; his hatred of Ravillon increased in proportion as his suspicions augmented: the greatest part of the night passed in earnest conversation; and it was not till near dawn-light that the chamber was silent. Mademoiselle de Sevrac then, with a trembling hand, was preparing to open her packet: she listened and looked round, still fearful of interruption; the lamp, which stood upon her dressing table, was placed before a long old fashioned looking-glass; she broke the seal, and, by the dim light read, in a low voice, the contents of the inclosed letter. They were as follows:—

“The Marquis will probably escape:
“therefore employ your time well, and
“secure his daughter. If persuasion will
“not avail, force must be adopted: she
“must be yours, (and that, before events
“transpire, which will destroy our hopes,)
“or she must cease TO LIVE. Farewell,
“be secret and determined.”

Mademoiselle

Mademoiselle de Sevrac laid the paper on the table almost overcome with amazement, when, glancing her eyes towards the mirror which hung before her, she indistinctly saw the stern features of a man, directly over her shoulder. The lamp burnt pale, and the sudden horror that possessed her mind, fixed her in mute astonishment! The letter lay open, but she had neither courage to fold it, or to read it a second time; her eyes were nearly closed, and her palpitating heart knocked quickly in her bosom.

She remained a few moments in this dreadful state, when she heard a sort of stifly rustling in the chamber, which was followed by a profound silence. Again she had courage to raise her eyes; the grim visage was no longer at her shoulder; she, by degrees looked round; there was nothing mortal near her. She rose from the table and taking the light, examined the door, the small bolt had not been touched,

every thing remained secure and fast as she had made it on entering.

As the apartment was rather spacious, and her lamp afforded but a feeble light, she was inclined to believe that her imagination, worked on by fear and the solemn injunction on the cover of the packet, had conjured up the semblance of a human face; the more she reasoned with herself, the less did her mind retain the impression of horror which had appalled it. She opened her window, it was not yet twilight; the east had not even begun to brighten; she trimmed her lamp, and after again looking round her chamber, and finding all as silent as death, once more prepared to examine the letter.

As she raised the paper near the light, a deep sigh, startled her from her purpose: she listened, and concluding that it came from the Marquis's chamber, again endeavoured to read:—a groan, not loud, but

but lengthened, arrested her attention :— still she thought that it proceeded from the Marquis or her mother, and a third time the paper trembled in her hand. But her resolution was vanquished completely, when she heard a voice articulate, “Extinguish your light, touch not the mysterious paper, but leave it to those whom it may concern. You are surrounded by peril; temerity will provoke desperation. Do therefore as you are commanded.”

Convinced that imagination had no part in her present alarm, she unbolted the door, and in a moment entered the Marquis’s chamber; where, unable to utter her fears or her astonishment, she sunk upon the bed in an agony of terror. Madame de Sevrac and the Marquis, concluding that a dream had occasioned her agitation, endeavoured to rouse her mind from the false impression of fear; but she soon recovered the power of speaking, and with a faltering voice she entreated them to

wait till day-break, when she promised to reveal such events as should explain her conduct.

As soon as the first glimpse of light entered their windows, Sabina informed the Marquis of the alarming visit she had received from a stranger, though from prudential motives she did not venture to disclose the secret of the letter. He accompanied her to her chamber, where every thing wore the appearance of perfect security. The lamp was still there, but Sabina instantly perceived that the paper was gone. They then examined every corner; and the Marquis, on finding that the old hangings hung loose from the wall, instantly concluded that some means of communication with another apartment might be concealed behind them. His surmises were exemplified; on raising the coarse tapestry a door was discovered which opened to a lesser chamber: it had no appearance of design to answer any particular purpose, but

but seemed to be a simple communication from one room to the other, which had been hidden merely to avoid separating the hangings.

They explored the adjoining apartment. But there appeared no signs of its having been occupied the preceding night. The hostess was then questioned; she informed them that a traveller had stopped during the night, after she was in bed, that he had only required an early breakfast, while the post-horses were harnessing, and that before day-break he had proceeded on his journey. This intelligence only tended to encrease their amazement, and the whole transaction was more enveloped in obscurity than ever.

At breakfast St. Clair joined them; the languor which was visible in Sabina's countenance, discovered that she had past a sleepless night: St. Clair was on the point of enquiring the cause, when the recol-

lection of the paper which he had given her, added to a small portion of self-love, whispered, that her mind had been occupied on subjects too interesting to admit of repose. Sabina was less satisfied with the cause of her depression, and wished eagerly for an opportunity to speak of the letter which was still unknown to the Marquis.

Their journey every hour became more enchanting ; the scenery being new to the travellers, and the mellowing season giving a ripe lustre to every luxuriant object. At the still of evening, advancing along an extensive and fertile plain, the beams of the retiring sun, as they gilded the waving fields of ripe corn, presented to their sight the ancient city of Bologna. The travellers quitted their carriage, and, in order to contemplate the splendid diversity which covered the landscape, resolved to proceed on foot till the close of twilight. The western horizon displayed that universal glow which is only to be seen in southern climates.

climates. On every side the eye was delighted with the view of magnificent villas, surrounded with pasturage, and shaded with plantations of hazel, chefnuts, walnut trees, and vineyards, bowing with loaded clustres : while the refreshing breezes descended from the Apennines, their form grandly irregular, and their sublime effect heightened by the lustre of the sky, and the vast extent of the horizon, which relieved their summits.

CHAP.

CHAP. VII.

"The wise and active conquer difficulties

"By daring to attempt them: sloth and folly

"Shiver and shrink at sight of toil and hazard,

"And make th' impossibility they fear."

ROWE.

AS the travellers advanced along the plain, the spires of Bologna became every moment more distinct: the rich assemblage of splendid objects, the tower of the Garisenda, and the spacious roofs of the different buildings, all tinged with the glow of evening, by turns claimed their admiration, till they reached the gates of the city, which commanded the beauties of Lombardy, extending as far as the eye could trace towards the north, giving a shadowy and indistinct view of Romagna, and the rich track of country leading towards Padua and Venice.

The

The diversity of nature might have charmed the senses of St. Clair, had they not been fascinated by still more powerful attractions ; as Sabina ascended the slope leading to the gates of Bologna, the glow of the evening sky reflected a crimson hue upon her countenance which embellished every feature. St. Clair fixed his eyes in admiration on Sabina. The Marquis and Madame de Sevrac were absorbed in contemplating the surrounding scenery, when they were addressed by a *facchino*, (or porter) who requested permission to conduct them to an hotel for the accommodation of travellers.

Lost in a delicious reverie, St. Clair was deaf to the officious zeal of the *facchino* : the Marquis, whose mind was too much agitated to fix on one object, was more easily roused from contemplation, and by a complacent nod, accompanied with a smile of acquiescence, accepted the proposal. The hotel was not far from the gates of
the

the city, and, in a few minutes, they were conveniently lodged for the night.

The conversation of St. Clair was highly gratifying to his companions, it was felt and admired by the Marquis and Madame de Sevrac; while it threw an encreased melancholy over the mind of their daughter. She beheld St. Clair every moment with encreasing attention: every word, every look, and every action called forth an interest which menaced her repose; reflection told her, that St. Clair was a stranger; that she was wholly unacquainted with his sentiments and connections; that the zeal which he evinced, might be employed merely with the hope to deceive, or, what was equally probable, proceed from mere habitual civility. All these suggestions which reason whispered, found credit in her mind; but St. Clair was still amiable; he was still her associate; he was the friend of her sorrows, the preserver of her father.

They

They supped early, and, the night being sultry, St. Clair proposed that they should refresh themselves beneath the piazzas which embellish the city: the proposition was readily acceded to, and they strolled towards the Palazzo Publico, opposite to which stands the superb fountain enriched by the labours of Giovanni Bologna, the pupil of Michael Angelo. The water, which gushes from the upper part of the pile, and falls in clear and rapid streams to its base, by its splashing sound drew them towards it. On the steps sat several young persons of both sexes, some singing, others listening, and all drawn thither by the serenity of the night. The moon, which shone clearly, distinctly displayed the Palazzo Publico, and while the travellers stood contemplating the building, the clock, from the tower of Sancta Petronio struck eleven, and the Marquis, fatigued more with the mind's sufferings than the body's labours, proposed returning to the hotel.

As

As they passed near the steps of the fountain, the Marquis beheld a young woman almost overwhelmed in an agony of tears. St. Clair was occupied in earnest conversation with Sabina and Madame de Sevrac; but the smallest semblance of affliction never failed to interest the feelings of the Marquis, and he first stopped, and then loitered behind his companions, to observe the emotions of the young woman!

She continued to shed tears abundantly; and her sobbings were frequently interrupted by the most fervent ejaculations: de Sevrac paused, the delicacy of generous minds, often prevents their obtruding on the sacred rights of domestic sorrow; and the fountain of affliction continues to flow, merely through the timidity of the heart that pities it the most.

The young woman rose from the steps where she was sitting, and filled a large flask
in

in the reservoir at the foot of the fountain. The idea of her departure induced the Marquis to advance a few steps towards her. His feet were guided by the strong impulse of his heart, and he had not the power to restrain them. A few paces brought him to the spot where the mourner stood, gazing at him with sympathetic solicitude. The light of the moon shone upon the fountain, bestowing on the falling lines of water a cool and beautiful brilliancy: but had all the wonders of the earth at that moment opened to de Sevrac's view, they could not have drawn his eyes from the form and countenance of the incognita. A black silk veil, which only covered her forehead, added an interesting expression to the most regular features. Her arm, which was white, as the whitest marble, encircled the large flask which she had recently filled, while her other hand, placed on her bosom, confined the veil which descended to her feet.

The

The Marquis addressed her with politeness and delicacy, and requested permission to bear her flask for her. At the sound of his voice she started and exclaimed, "Merciful God ! it is the same !" darted from the spot where she stood, and hastened across the square with the utmost precipitation.

De Sevrac, who had long lost sight of his companions, followed. She turned a corner, near the Palazzo Publico, and availing herself of the shade of the piazzas in the street along which she passed, quickened her pace every moment in the hope of escaping her pursuer. De Sevrac's curiosity was augmented by the caution which she betrayed, till, after innumerable turnings and windings, he observed her stop at a small *porte cochere* : he rushed forward to intercept her entrance.

"Why do you follow me?" said she.
"I conjure you to relinquish a pursuit which can only lead you to a scene of for-

ROW :

row : you have already known too much ; you have shared those tears which now fall for the afflictions of another."

De Sevrac's curiosity was wound up to impatience, while astonishment chained his tongue : after knocking several times with great caution, the door was at length opened, and the young woman was on the point of passing the threshold, when he caught her arm and prevented her from proceeding. She endeavoured to break from him, but he held her forcibly. "Hear me," said he in a faltering voice, "I entreat you to explain this mysterious conduct ; lead me to the scene of sorrow which you describe ; I can bear to contemplate the darkest shade of human misery, and it may be in my power, unfortunate as I am, to afford it a ray of consolation."

"Alas !" replied the incognita, embracing his hand with timid respect, "What will your generous heart feel, when

when you learn, that the anguish which preys upon mine, proceeds from ——." At this interesting moment a whispering voice from a stair-case articulated, "Marianna."

She turned hastily from the Marquis, whose consternation prevented his making any effort to detain her, she advanced towards the foot of the stairs, which terminated in a small court-yard, and with the most agitated tone enquired—"Does he still live?"

"He does," answered the person whom Marianna had questioned; de Sevrac now felt new courage, and followed her up the stairs to the first story, where a glimmering lamp, which hung near a door, afforded him an opportunity of again observing her.

"I entreat you not to follow me," said she. "To this abode of despair no mortal power

power can impart consolation : and, of all men living, you are the last whom I would suffer to enter."

" Why the last ?" cried de Sevrac impatiently.

Marianna sighed deeply ; the expression of her eyes was exquisitely touching, the glow of health had been destroyed by sorrow, but she was beautifully interesting ; mild, polished in manners, in the prime of youth ; and, though drest with the simplicity of the humblest *bourgeoise*, displayed charms, the most captivating. The Marquis till that moment was a total stranger to her person, and his astonishment, at the knowledge which she had of him, encreased by every word she uttered.

She leant upon the railing of the stairs, and her tears again flowed in torrents ; every moment she turned her eyes wistfully towards the door of an apartment which
was

was near her : an hour had elapsed since de Sevrac first observed Marianna at the fountain ; the clock reminded him that it was midnight ; he wished to return to his party, yet he had not the power to leave her. He ventured to take her hand, it trembled, but made no resistance.

“ You must remain here no longer,” said Marianna wildly ; “ it is absolutely necessary that I should enter this chamber ; the apprehension that curiosity may induce you to follow, has prevented my making the attempt : I have little strength to repulse you, and you are impelled by a desire to know, that, which would deeply afflict you.”

“ The miseries of a fellow creature should not be passed over, from a selfish idea that it might be painful to examine them,” replied the Marquis. “ What are the griefs you encounter ? If they proceed from the apprehensions of losing a beloved husband,

husband, a parent, a child, or a brother; at least I can procure the best medical aid that this city will afford." Marianna sighed, and shook her head; the Marquis continued—

"Or, if the frowns of fortune inflict a lesser kind of anguish, I can in some degree lessen the rigour of your fate: indeed Marianna, affliction shall not corrode your heart, without a tear of sympathy to mitigate its throbbing: tell me all you fear, and all you suffer; believe me the bosom feels lightened of half its burthen in dividing it with those who sympathise by sad experience: you appear to know me; you say that I have shared your tears! is it possible?"

"Do not importune me," replied Marianna, "your kindness only adds to my affliction, and drives me to despair."

"Drive thee to despair!" interrupted the Marquis, "Perish the monster, who

would wound thy meek and sinking spirit ;
who would plant a thorn in a bosom, so
alive to sensibility !”

“ I shall, perhaps, see you again to-morrow,” said Marianna. “ The Supreme Being ! who knows all that I suffer, will hear my supplications !. Leave me for the present, and at the fountain, at the same hour—”

De Sevrac still held her hand, when she was interrupted by a gentle rustling in the chamber ; she turned wildly round, and with a countenance of fear and attention, fixed her eyes on those of the Marquis ; her bosom throbbed quickly, her whole frame was agitated, and she leant on his shoulder in an agony of affliction.

“ For you, Oh ! for you do I suffer this torture !” said Marianna.

“ Mercy forbid !” exclaimed de Sevrac, while he supported her sinking frame ;
again

again the rustling was heard in the chamber; she raised her eyes towards heaven, and scarcely seemed to breathe; "Perhaps by this time all is over!" said she with a tone mournfully impressive.

The Marquis, no longer able to command his feelings, rushed towards the door of the chamber. Marianna faintly shrieked; the sound of her voice arrested his steps. "Oh! do not fear," said de Sevrac, "I have not the power to add to your afflictions. Yet suffer me to undeceive you: the griefs which you lament so sensibly, cannot originate in me; you surely mistake me for another; for, by all my hopes of Heaven, till this hour, I never saw you." He was interrupted by Marianna—

"So pale! so persecuted! and yet so brave! I never shall forget it."

"Forget what?" said the Marquis tenderly—again a sound of something stirring, attracted

attracted her notice:—"Oh! that chamber!" said she, with a sigh that seemed to rend her bosom.

"What of that chamber?" cried de Sevrac earnestly.

"It is," replied Marianna, "it is—"

"What?" said the Marquis, more eagerly than ever.

"A scene of death!"

"Who dies?" continued de Sevrac. At this instant the door was gently opened: the Marquis drew back to conceal himself—Marianna hurried into the chamber, and the door was instantly closed.

De Sevrac waited another hour, but a continued silence prevailed; he listened, but not even the lowest whisper interrupted the melancholy stillness of the time and situation.

ation. The lamp, nearly exhausted, cast a dim ray on the wall of the stair-case. The Marquis began to reflect on the danger of his remaining any longer on a spot, which seemed surrounded with horrors. He then recollected that he was alone, unarmed, and a stranger in Bologna: prudence suggested that the sorrow and caution evinced by Marianna, might proceed from her repugnance to some plan, formed for his assassination. She had prevented his entering the chamber; she had apprized him that it was a scene of death; she seemed to know him, though he was wholly unacquainted with her person; all these circumstances combined to awaken apprehensions, and with reluctance he descended to the street.

The eagerness with which he had followed the footsteps of Marianna, had deceived him with respect to the ground over which he pursued her. He now found that he was at a considerable distance from

his hotel, and it was not without difficulty that he found his way to the quarter where it was situated. The ruminations that crowded on his mind, tended in some measure to beguile the time, though they bewildered his progress. He traversed the streets another hour, and it was near day-break when he reached his lodging.

The anxiety which his absence had occasioned, subsided when he related the adventure which detained him. Every eye shed a tear for the sorrows of the incognita, and every mind was occupied in examining the mystery of her conduct. Madame de Sevrac and Sabina retired to rest; but the Marquis and St. Clair determined not to sleep till they had found Marianna, and discovered the cause of her affliction.

It was in vain that de Sevrac endeavoured to recollect the places through which he had passed during the preceding night; the glare of day wholly changed the

the appearance of every object; the piazzas, when lengthened by the night gloom, and the squares which had been chequered by long shadows, where the moon-light was intercepted, assumed a new and more lively aspect. They proceeded however to a distant quarter of the city, and enquired at every *porte cochere* that bore the smallest similarity to that of Marianna's habitation. No person of either her name or description was to be found. St. Clair rallied the Marquis, and began to consider his adventure as an affair of gallantry, which he had disguised, merely to lull the suspicions of Madame de Sevrac.

They return to their hotel. The edge of curiosity was more keen than ever, owing to the disappointment which had attended their first efforts: de Sevrac found it impossible to quit Bologna under the anxiety which he experienced, and therefore determined to dedicate the whole day to the task of discovering Marianna.

The hours crept tardily on, till the close of evening, when he took his stand near the Palazza Publico. As soon as twilight closed, and the moon began to rise over the city, he approached the fountain, and seating himself on the steps which encircle its base, resolved there to wait patiently for the event of the night.

He had scarcely been at his post an hour, when a light and juvenile form came tripping across the square ; de Sevrac remained silent, and in a few moments recognized the person of Marianna. As she approached the fountain she discovered the Marquis: she stopped, hesitated, advanced, and, drawing her veil over her face, began to fill her large flask, at the same time cautiously avoiding the enquiring eyes of de Sevrac. Having accomplished the task which brought her thither, she again proceeded across the square, every moment looking back and quickening her pace ; the Marquis followed ; she observed him

him pursuing her, and stopping on a sudden, mildly addressed him.

"I perceive," said she, "that you are interested in my fate; your sympathy demands my gratitude; your curiosity, my forgiveness: when I saw you last night, my despair was unutterable; but Heaven has allowed me a short respite, and I am again permitted to hope; the acute agonies which I then felt, in some degree subside. If you wish to know more of my misfortunes, your desire shall be gratified, though the full knowledge of them will tend but little to recompense your pains."

"Grant me but that knowledge," said the Marquis, "and I will be satisfied." She walked on, and de Sevrac accompanied her: both were silent, till they arrived at the *porte cochere* of Marianna's dwelling. The Marquis, after being requested to tread softly, was ushered into a small anti-chamber; it had a door of communication with

a lesser room; they entered the inner apartment, which was poorly furnished, and in the recess of which stood a narrow wretched bed; the curtains were nearly closed, and a lamp was placed on a chair beside it.

The Marquis recoiled; there was a something singularly touching in the gloom and silence of the chamber; Marianna threw her veil across a chair, and advancing, with a deep sigh, towards the bed, drew back the curtains.

The object that presented itself was a young man, whose breathing only discovered signs of existence; a deathlike paleness overspread his features; he seemed to sleep; Marianna's eyes were raised towards Heaven, with grateful expression; the Marquis approached cautiously. He examined the countenance of the young man, it was wholly new to him, and his astonishment was greater than ever. Marianna, after promising that she would immediately

ately return, quitted the chamber, and de Sevrac was left alone with the sleeping stranger.

He waited near half an hour, and no Marianna appeared. The house was perfectly still. He was fearful of moving, lest he should awaken the young man. At length a deep groan roused him, and he advanced towards the bed; he drew back the curtains, but the change in the countenance of the youth was terrible; the placid paleness which he before observed, was only the effect of a transient slumber: he now looked wildly round, made signs of uneasiness at the presence of a stranger, and in a feeble voice enquired after Marianna.

Dè Sevrac knew not what to say; he approached the young man, and in a mild and compassionating tone, enquired if he could be of service.

The exhausted spirits of the invalid, seemed for a moment to experience renovation. He raised his feeble frame on his pillow, and after gazing earnestly on the Marquis, uttered an ejaculation of horror, and sunk senseless before him. It was in vain that de Sevrac supported him in his arms, and endeavoured to recall sensation: death seemed to seal his lips in eternal silence; his eyes were closed, his cheek cold, and his limbs powerless.

The Marquis, believing that he held in his arms a lifeless body, was almost wild with horror: again he took the lamp, and examined the livid features: no faint recollection of ever having seen them before, lent a clue to the singularity of the adventure, and his imagination was bewildered almost to frenzy. He laid the body gently down, and after placing his purse, containing twenty *louis d'ors*, on the table, with trembling steps, hastened into the street.

When

When he reached his hotel, the first person he met was St. Clair; his agitated manner, was the prelude to his story: which, without reserve, he speedily related.

St. Clair, whose mind less interested in the adventure than that of the Marquis, was more capable of suggesting counsel. The situation appeared to him replete with peril. Marianna had accused de Sevrac of being accessory to her misfortunes; and the circumstance of his being alone with the object of her affections when he expired, would possibly involve him in perplexities from which it might be difficult to escape. His advice was, therefore, that the Marquis should quit Bologna with all convenient speed. It was with difficulty that St. Clair prevailed on him to take his counsel; which, (after he had called to mind his sufferings at Milan, his escape from the sentence of death, and that sentence nearly put in execution, on the bare strength

strength of appearances only), he reluctantly adopted.

At sun-rise they quitted Bologna; St. Clair's conversation, polished without conceit, and enlightened without pedantry, engaged the party till they passed the village of Pianoro; where a combination of scenery, bursting on the sight, arrested their attention. It presented a long chain of Alps, on one side, rearing their majestic heads, and forming a grand and picturesque bulwark of one hundred miles, westward, to the Adriatic shores: and, on the other, "the bold romantic mountains of Carrara, tinged with the blue mist rising from the waters of the Mediterranean,"* bounded by an extent of horizon, at once vast and astonishing.

"How little do they know of the beauties of nature," said Mademoiselle de Sev-

* Vide Smith's Views, published in 1792.

rac, "who, pent up in cities, fancy that their palaces contain all the luxuries of the creation! The poorest mountaineer enjoys more happiness than we ever knew in our proudest prosperity!" At this moment St. Clair pointed out a small hovel that seemed to hang its rushy dome on the jutting fragment of a precipice.

"Observe that lonely hut," cried he, "how often has it been surrounded by the wintry tempest, and menaced by the overwhelming torrent! while the huge blocks of stone that hang over it, making the eye ache to look on them, prove, that objects the most terrible to contemplate, are sometimes our best safeguards."

De Sevrac felt a similitude which St. Clair did not mean to pourtray, and shuddered.

"Yet," said Sabina, "that hovel has resisted the stormy seasons; it has stood unmoved;

unmoved ; while the loftiest mansions of our nobles have shook to their foundation. The sun smiled upon it ; the healthful breezes refreshed its tenant ; the timorous chamois approached its threshold with safety, and it was the abode of peace, when busier scenes were replete with horrors."

" 'Tis even so !" said Madame de Sevrac, sighing ; " The storm that roots up the mountain forest, often directs its course far above the simple flowers that decorate its turf ! The loftiest situations are most calculated to attract the fury of the elements."

" Let us proceed," interrupted the Marquis, hastily. The mules continued their route, and the conversation ceased.

De Sevrac during the whole day ruminated deeply on his adventure at Bologna : the graces, the tears of Marianna, had made an impression on his mind, which

no change of scenery, no diversity of wonders, could eradicate. The pallid countenance of the senseless stranger, was strongly visible to his imagination: and the few sentences he uttered were vague and embarrassed. Before twilight they arrived at the inn where they meant to sleep, and every individual of the party, except St. Clair, looked forward to repose, with eagerness.

CHAP. VIII.

" 'Tis now the very witching time of night

" When church-yards yawn, and hell itself breathes forth

" Contagion to the world."

SHAKSPEARE.

THE auberge where they were destined to pass the night being full of travellers, de Sevrac and his party, arriving late, were obliged to content themselves with the worst apartments. Only one tolerable chamber remained unoccupied, and St. Clair, insisted that it might be arranged for the Marquis and Madame de Sevrac; the host was therefore under the necessity of hiring a lodging for him, in the house of a neighbouring bottegajo*.

The room allotted to Mademoiselle de Sevrac, was situated at the extremity of a

* Shopkeeper.

long gallery, which divided it from that where the Marquis slept. Having travelled continually since sun-rise, and purposing at day-break to pursue their journey, they retired to rest an hour before midnight, St. Clair having requested Sabina's permission to leave the most valuable part of his luggage in her chamber.

Sabina, whose mind had been fatigued with a variety of reflections during the day, was scarcely asleep, when she was startled by the sound of footsteps in her chamber. She rose softly, and by the glimmering of a lamp which was placed behind a cabinet, she perceived through the opening in her curtains the figure of a man, only a few paces from her bed. He wore a black mask, and seemed scarcely to breathe, as if fearful of alarming her. In his hand he held a poniard; the side light fell upon the blade, and it shone distinctly: she expected every instant to receive her death from the hand of an assassin; and, counterfeiting

perfecting sleep, lay, nearly overpowered with terror.

"St. Clair," said a low voice, "thy hour is come!" Sabina made no answer.

The figure turned from her bed, and proceeded towards the cabinet;—on his taking the lamp, Sabina again closed her eyes, her curtains were gently undrawn, and the light was repeatedly passed before her lids. Her heart beat with convulsive quickness, she felt the blood chilled in her cheek; the curtains were again closed, and the lamp again placed behind the cabinet.

The stranger stood for several moments perfectly still, as if meditating some act of horror. A deep and laboured sigh, seemed to bespeak a soul overcharged with guilt, and it had hardly escaped his bosom when he again returned to the side of her bed.

A stern

A stern and tremulous voice uttered "Sabina." She made no reply:—Her name was a second time, articulated: she was still silent. She then felt a hand, powerfully grasping hers, and again the Russian addressed her. "Speak, said he, "but mind that you close your eyes and speak softly. Your life depends on your own prudence; counterfeit sleep no longer—but summon resolution to answer my questions: whither are you going, and who is the foreigner that travels with you?"

"We are proceeding towards Florence, our companion is an Englishman," said Sabina faintly.

"His name and connections?"

"His name is Edmund St. Clair. His family is noble."

"He must die;" said the stranger.

"His fate is irrevocable."—

Sabina

Sabina's heart was agonized in the extreme: her whole frame shook, and the cold drops paced down her forehead.

"Why do you tremble?" said the rufian, "Why does the fate of St. Clair interest you so deeply?"

"He preserved my father's life," cried Sabina, hesitating.

"Be brief," said the villain; "conceal nothing that you can reveal; sincerity may preserve you from that destruction which deceit will inevitably draw upon you. It was in the hope of finding St. Clair that I concealed myself in this chamber; the luggage, which I observed deposited here, taught me to believe that it was destined for him. Tremble not, Sabina, chance, not design, has exposed you to this visit; nothing now remains but to ensure your silence."

"I wait

“ I wait your commands,” said Made-
moiselle de Sevrac.

“ Mark me well,” continued the stranger,
who still kept his figure on the shadowy side
of the bed : “ **The** restless spirit of mur-
dered innocence demands retribution ; for
this, from hour to hour, that spirit haunts
me : progressive steps, from crime to
crime, each rising from the former, ren-
ders the name of de Sevrac hateful.”

“ Of de Sevrac !”

“ Yes : smother your emotion—de Se-
vrac and St. Clair, must perish.”

“ De Sevrac, and St. Clair ?”

“ Both,” continued the ruffian ; “ both,
for the crimes of others.”

“ Oh ! God !” exclaimed Sabina, “ is
there no way to mitigate their doom ? can
an

an accumulation of crimes appease the restless shade of departed innocence?"

"The name of de Sevrac is stained with blood," replied the stranger.

"With blood!"

"With innocent blood!—The pride of rank, the arrogance of power, can no longer sanction crimes:—my soul is big with vengeance. The name shall perish."

"Unfortunate de Sevrac!" cried Sabina, shuddering.

"Suppress your complaints, and obey my injunctions," said the stranger. "You must swear by all that is solemn and sacred, never to discover this interview, or by any means, direct or indirect, to apprize either the Marquis or St. Clair, of the danger that awaits them;—such an event will only accelerate their destruction."

"Horrible

“Horrible injunction,” exclaimed Sabina. “Is there no circumstance that can soften your revenge.”

The villain paused—“There is only one,” said he, hesitating—

“Whom will it save?”

“Your father. I shall soon visit you again; the event will depend upon your secrecy; the power will be yours, and you shall, in a short time, know the means of exercising it. But time flies hastily; listen and obey. I shall leave, on the cabinet in the corner of your chamber, a small crucifix of ebony, which I now present to your lips, you will find it impressed with the word “remember.” If at a distant period, and in a moment of extremity, a similar talisman should meet your eyes, I charge you to swear, by your hopes of salvation, that you will be silent.”

The poniard was held to her bosom at the same moment that the crucifix was pressed to her lips: she kissed it, and fainted.

On reviving from the effect of suspended circulation, she instantly recollected all that had passed; the chamber was in total darkness, and the extreme agitation which this extraordinary visit occasioned, for a time prevented her stirring. She lay terrified and trembling, till dawn-light, when she rose to examine her chamber, and to ascertain whether or not, all the events which impressed her mind had really happened. As she approached the cabinet, her heart throbbed at the remembrance of her solemn vow, and her tears gushed involuntarily, when she considered that it bound her to such dreadful secrecy.

The crucifix lay on the cabinet: she examined it on every side; the word "remember," was engraved on the back. She knelt

knelt before it, and, raising her supplicating hands, implored the protection of Heaven. As soon as she had dressed herself, she hastened to the chamber of the Marquis: with tottering steps she approached him, and almost suffocated by tears, threw her arms about his neck, and repeatedly embraced him.

De Sevrac's astonishment was excessive; in vain did he question her; in vain endeavoured to develope the cause of her sudden perturbation; her eyes were swollen with weeping, and her whole mien was wild and disordered. Whenever she glanced at the Marquis, her agonies were redoubled; Madame de Sevrac's distress was terrible; at this juncture St. Clair arrived. The sight of Sabina, in such an unusual state of despair, awakened his curiosity: he conjured her to compose her mind, and to assign some reason for her agitation. She became, by degrees more calm, but not less sorrowful; a deep melancholy

lancholy took possession of her soul, and she passed the remainder of the day absorbed in meditation.

At every place where they stopped either to change their mules, or to take refreshment, Sabina seized a moment to contemplate the pledge of dreadful secrecy. Every glance conveyed new tortures to her mind: she would have given worlds, had they been at her disposal, to have recalled a vow, which, she longed, yet feared to break. A father's life depended on it: but would the violation of her oath secure his safety? No! it would perhaps accelerate his destruction, St. Clair's, her own.

St. Clair, who, though he had never seen Mademoiselle de Sevrac happy, had always beheld her tranquil, was strongly impressed by the change in her deportment. Silent, gloomy, and desponding, she seemed to shrink from consolation, and
eagerly

eagerly to cherish a secret and rooted sorrow. The variety of prospects that opened to their view; the luxuriant fertility of the scenes through which they passed; the roaring torrent, the stupendous precipice, excited no emotion in her bosom.

The inn where they stopped to sleep, before sun-set, was situated in a beautiful valley: they relinquished the idea of travelling farther, that night, on account of Sabina's situation. St. Clair took her hand as she descended from the carriage; her look was mournfully expressive. She made her excuses and retired to her chamber, where, throwing herself on her bed, the fatigue of travelling, her last agonized night, and the warmth of the evening, soon overpowered her senses, and she fell into a profound sleep.

St. Clair, uneasy at Sabina's absence, stole from the Marquis and Madame de Sevrac and went in search of her; it was

soon after her sorrows were lulled to temporary rest, that he entered her chamber; at the sight of Sabina sleeping—he drew back, and was at the door of the apartment when the change of her countenance fascinated his attention. A secret horror agitated her features; he watched her for a moment with tender solicitude; she breathed gently, her lids were scarcely closed, and he could plainly perceive, under the dark long lashes, a convulsive motion of the eye which indicated an unquiet mind.

Trembling to behold so interesting an object, and alarmed lest she should awake while he remained in her chamber, he was on the point a second time of passing the threshold, when he heard her, in a faint and interrupted voice, exclaim, “Unfortunate St. Clair!—unhappy father!”

Arrested by words so emphatic, he listened eagerly, and in a few moments she continued

continued—"Oh! spare him! my life is wrapped in his!"—a murmured groan followed; St. Clair was almost petrified with astonishment. She began to move, as if her dreams were at an end. St. Clair stole down stairs, and, with a heavy heart, wandered along the high road, wrapt in his own thoughts, till he found himself in a valley at some distance from the auberge. He took his seat on a rude fragment of stone, near the foot of a cascade; which, rushing from a woody eminence, formed a liquid column in mid-air, scarcely touching the intermediate space, till, reaching the valley, it foamed along with terrific impetuosity.

The wild features of nature were at that moment congenial to the sentiments of St. Clair; the dashing of the resistless waters, and the scattered mist which frosted the jutting precipice, and thinly enveloped the fantastic shrubs hanging over the most prominent blocks of marble, gave the soli-

tary spot a mixture of the sublime and awful, which fed his disturbed imagination. The mysterious words uttered by Sabina indicated more than he dared to interpret; for St. Clair, with all the frailties of his age, and all the propensity for pleasure which modern education inculcates, possessed a mind, noble and generous! The misfortunes of the Marquis claimed his sympathy; the virtues of Madame de Sevrac, his respect; but the combination of powers with which nature had endowed Sabina, was dangerous to contemplate.—St. Clair recollected them, and shuddered.

He remained in this still retreat, till the sun had sunk beneath the horizon; for, on raising his eyes towards the summit of the precipice, he observed the dark foliage faintly tinged with its last lustre. He rose to return to the auberge—and taking the narrow path, as the din of the cataract grew more faint, his ear was saluted by the songs of the birds, which peopled the wood
in

in legions, flying from branch to branch, and filling the shady avenues with wild melody. He continued to stroll along, entranced in that sort of melancholy musing, which is reserved for minds of a superior order. He was pensive, but he was not wholly silent; for the name of Sabina de Sevrac, frequently, and involuntarily escaped his lips: all the circles of society, all the attractions of the world, were forgotten, in a solitary nook, where one celestial object enjoyed an undivided idolatry. The increasing gloom of twilight, the languor which the excessive heat of the day had produced, and the mournful ideas which filled his mind with regret, united to feed its meditation. Sabina's words so completely possessed his soul that he could not avoid repeating them: "Unfortunate St. Clair!" said he, as he walked slowly through the wood, with his arms folded, and his eyes bent on the path, "Yes! thou art indeed unfortunate!"

He was awakened from his reverie by some one stealing among the withered leaves that clothed the underwood, and in a moment he saw the object of his ruminations hastening from him. He darted between the trees, called to her, and conjured her to hear him; she continued to fly and he, following, soon overtook her. She blushed and was confused; but assuming an air of confidence and composure, "St. Clair," said she, "why are you here alone? I came to seek you; forgive me, I see that you are safe, and I am satisfied."

"Safe, charming Sabina!" cried St. Clair smiling at the idea, "What should molest me?"

Her embarrassment could not escape the prying eyes of such an observer: a sudden paleness stole over her countenance, she grasped his hand and looked fearfully round her; the evening air whispered among

among the overhanging branches. She started, "Alas!" said she, "my senses are strangely susceptible of terror: let us return to the auberge."—There had scarcely passed a period in St. Clair's life, since he was capable of feeling the electric force of female enchantment, since his bosom thrilled with that graceful sensibility which ennobles while it subdues the human heart, when he could have resisted the strong temptation, which the mischievous imp, opportunity, at that moment offered. St. Clair was no stoic; he had all the frailties of a vivid imagination; all the passions, that run wild in the breast of man; all the impetuosity of youth; all the susceptibility of genius; and yet, the virtues, the sorrows of Sabina, were to him, sacred! He had preserved the father; he was not capable of sacrificing the child! The obligations which the one owed him, were the invulnerable safeguards of the other.

“ Ah ! St. Clair !” cried Mademoiselle de Sevrac, looking earnestly in his face, as he leant against a tree that stood near him, “ You are strangely agitated ! You recall to my mind that dreadful night, when I first saw you. There is no danger here ; if any thing should approach you, I would —”

“ What would’st thou do ? angel of truth !”, said St. Clair, “ Heaven forbid that thou should’st be exposed to danger.”

“ Tis not for myself that I fear,” replied Sabina, “ the judge of all hearts, knows, how little I prize my own existence—but ; —” she hesitated ; St. Clair had not power to reply ; a tremulous emotion seized upon his heart, and his eyes were fixed on Mademoiselle de Sevrac’s with undescribable tenderness ! “ Unfortunate St. Clair !” he attempted to articulate. The faculty of utterance failed, and he

he threw himself on the turf, completely vanquished.

At this moment footsteps were heard approaching along the pathway, and immediately, a man, in a peasant's dress, with a rude and savage aspect, appeared between the trees. At the sight of Sabina and St. Clair, he halted, and instantly concealed himself behind a clump of trees, from whence he continued to watch them.

She knelt, and in a whisper entreated St. Clair to rise and save himself by flight. The gloom of the wood was considerably deepened by the advances of twilight. St. Clair rose; but Sabina's apprehensions increased when she saw the peasant come forth from his hiding place, and, with a quick but steady pace, approach them.

“Signor,” cried he, “I am glad that I have met you; for it is one of your description,

cription, whom I am in search of." Sabina's heart was sinking in her bosom.

"What is your purpose?" said St. Clair, calmly.

"It grieves me;" replied the peasant, but there is no remedy; I am driven by strong necessity, to undertake a task — ;" the fearful countenance of Mademoiselle de Sevrac arrested his attention and he ceased to speak.

"Proceed," said St. Clair, at the same time placing himself as a guard before Sabina, whose trembling limbs with difficulty supported her.

"Follow me," continued the peasant; "on the skirts of the wood you shall receive an explanation of my conduct." St. Clair was unarmed, but he was a stranger to fear; Sabina grasped his hand and hung round him; the expression of her features

features marked the agonies of her mind. "Oh! St. Clair," said she, "whither are you going?" He smiled, and endeavoured to persuade her that no ill could befall him. "This poor peasant," said he, "has no evil purpose to accomplish; suffer me to follow him; with my life I will defend you."

They proceeded together, along the path, till they came to a steep mountain, near the foot of which stood a small cottage. Here the peasant stopped: "Beneath that low roof," said he, "and upon a bed of sickness, lies a man, broken hearted! I have supported him, till my means are exhausted, and I should be loath, at last, to see him perish."

"Heaven forbid!" said Mademoiselle de Sevrac, with returning courage. "Here, take my purse, it contains but little; yet that little may procure him some consolation." The peasant eagerly took the purse; his

his hand trembled with joy, and his voice faltered, while he blessed her humanity.

"I see, I read in your face, the pleasure you feel," said the peasant; "till lately I never knew the delight of assisting a fellow creature in distress. Ah, Signora, how much do I envy you."

"The world is full of misery, and you seem to have a tender heart," said Sabina; "why then, did you never experience that felicity till lately?"

"Because," replied the peasant, "never having met with a being, poorer than myself, none had asked me for relief."

"Happy would it be for the rich and powerful, if they had the same excuse," said Sabina. The peasant again blest her, and ran towards his cottage; St. Clair followed him, and with redoubled bounty increased the sum which Sabina had bestowed,

stowed, but declined visiting the sick man, till the next morning, when he promised to return. It was now almost dark, the thick mists descending from the mountains, floated over the wood, and rendered every object nearly invisible. The peasant's little son was sent to guide them, and they hastened back to the auberge, where the Marquis and Madame de Sevrac waited impatiently for their return. On their arrival a full explanation took place, at the conclusion of which they all agreed to visit the invalid on the following morning.

CHAP. IX.

" Full many a melancholy night
 " He watch'd the slow return of light ;
 " And fought the pow'rs of sleep
 " To spread a momentary calm
 " O'er his sad couch, and in the balm
 " Of bland oblivion's dews, his burning eyes to steep."

WARTON.

EARLY in the morning they all repaired to the cottage at the foot of the ascent ; the peasant's little boy was sitting at the door, and on seeing them advance from the valley, ran in to announce their arrival to the sick man, for the master of the cottage was gone to fetch his goats from the adjacent mountain. St. Clair proposed entering, with the Marquis, first ; lest the object of their attention should be in a state, that might too sensibly affect the feelings of Madame de Sevrac and Sabina.

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They had scarcely opened the little door, and crossed the threshold, when the good peasant came running towards them, and by his gestures, for a moment, prevented their proceeding. "Tread softly," said he, "perhaps he sleeps: I have watched by him the whole night, and he has rested bravely. Your bounty spread a sort of sun-shine over us; for Heaven knows, all within our cottage was as dark as winter." The peasant's eyes were full of tears; he tried to conceal them.

"Is it your kinsman that is sick?" said Sabina.

"No, Signora, he is to me almost a stranger; I found him fainting by the road side, on the skirts of our wood some few weeks since; I brought him home to my poor hovel, but he has never smiled since the hour I first saw him. Sorrow has nearly closed his eyes in spite of all that I could do to save him."

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"Is he of this country?" cried Madame de Sevrac.

"No; he is a Frenchman," replied the peasant, "a poor old abbé."

Madame de Sevrac, without waiting to hear more, rushed into the cottage where, on a small, but clean bed she instantly recognized the shrunk form of the Abbé Le Blanc.

His eyes were earnestly bent on the Marquis, who stood by his pillow overcome by surprize and joy; but the sound of Madame de Sevrac's voice seemed to give him new life; he endeavoured to raise himself, but his strength failed, and he appeared for a moment, as if deprived of all sensation. The poor peasant gazed and wondered, Sabina snatched his rough hand and kissed it repeatedly. St. Clair would readily have endured all the peasant's sorrows

forrows to have received such a recompense!

The Abbé's spirits revived—St. Clair hastened to the auberge for a flask of the best wine of the country, and by the time that he returned, every countenance wore a smile of satisfaction. The Abbé was reduced in spirit, as much as in constitution; at an age, when strength of the body, depends much on the tranquility of the mind, he had been driven from a splendid home to wander over the earth, a miserable exile; with a proud and generous heart, he had been obliged to exist on the bounty of one, whom he had loved, and tutored with the fondness of a parent. Philosophy had taught him to struggle against misfortune till all the powers of resistance were exhausted; and his prospects afforded no fresh store of hope, to renovate his fortitude, or to sustain the weight of his present calamities. A weary traveller through the
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rugged wilderness of adversity, he was seldom destined to meet an eye of pity, or to hear a sound of consolation; if, tempted by a momentary gleam of sunshine, he quitted the dreary path, and approached the mansions of ostentatious splendour, he found, that piety, in the threadbare garb of poverty, was an unwelcome guest. The spirit of conscious virtue forbade his tongue to supplicate; and the vacant eye of pride turns from the abode of silent wretchedness: forlorn, persecuted, and exposed to insult, or, what was still less supportable, contempt, bearing beneath the accumulated weight of years, the purest mental treasures, his only riches; where did he find the tear of pity, the sympathetic sigh, the Heaven-directed hand of charity? He found them in the instinctive philanthropist; the mountain peasant; the rude and unsophisticated child of nature!

The feeble state of the Abbé's health prevented the possibility of his being removed, at least for some time; the Marquis, having determined to wait the event, in vain entreated St. Clair to pursue his journey: day after day his departure was meditated, and as repeatedly protracted till the morrow. The Abbé recovered slowly; the assiduities of friendship, the tender attentions of Mademoiselle de Sevrac and her mother, and the faint hopes of better fortune, re-animated his declining form, and promised to protract a life which could no longer be productive of enjoyment.

A small uninhabited house near the foot of the mountain, seemed equal to the Marquis's finances, and the situation on which it stood, more enlivening than his hopes. He found upon enquiry that it might be hired for a trifling sum, and without hesitation became its master. It was

was in this small but romantic dwelling, that de Sevrac for the first time since his flight from Paris felt his heart glow with the pride of independance.

Several days were occupied in arranging the new habitation. Sabina was delighted with the task, and the interior of the little mansion soon wore a comfortable aspect. St. Clair requested permission to remain with them for a short time; and the Abbé Le Blanc at the end of a few days was sufficiently restored to enliven the domestic circle.

The house, which commanded a view of a beautiful and winding valley, had been originally inhabited by the steward of the vineyards, in the vicinity of the mountain; but its possessor was dislodged on the *Seigneurie* devolving to the abbot of a neighbouring convent; a man, whose piety and benevolence were the theme of universal commendation! When the weary pilgrim stopped

stopped at the gate of his celestial habitation, the Abbot bestowed on him, his good counsel ! When the poor villager languished in sickness, he gave him, his benediction ! when the noble visited his fertile domains, he sent him away loaded with, adulation ! and when the supplicating beggar approached the walls of his consecrated dwelling, he hastened to his cell and, implored for him the assistance of Heaven !

The Abbot, blest with all the good things of this world, passed half his hours in prayers for their continuance ; and the other half in enjoying them : because, to reject the bounty of Providence, was by him considered as an unpardonable crime. His gratitude was only equalled by his humility ; for believing man to be but frail and corruptible dust, he aimed not at perfection, but yielded to the all-governing hand of nature, and confessed himself her vassal by obeying her dictates.

The habitation which the Marquis hired for his family, and which they named the Chateau-neuf, stood in the front of an extensive vineyard, which, clothing one side of the mountain, served as a rich background for its wild and luxuriant decorations. Before it, numberless clusters of myrtle, lilac, and hazel, gave it an air of cultivation; while its slanting roof scarcely over-topped the woodbines and variegated shrubs that were thickly planted on every side, weaving a fragrant umbrage, which served to resist the fervid rays that fell on the neighbouring vineyards. Before the threshold, a clear but shallow stream ran swiftly over a bed of small pebbles, here and there ruffled by a block of black marble partly covered with vivid green moss, and fantastically carved by the rude hand of nature. The valley was enclosed on one side by a woody amphitheatre, whose gently sloping sides, served to shut in the prospect; while the other was studded with huts and cottages, belonging to those who worked

worked in the vintage, or tended the goats on the adjacent mountains. Some of these rude and silent habitations, were sheltered by the pendulous branches of stately trees; and others, exposed to all the changes of the seasons, on a bleak and rugged soil scantily carpeted with moss. The pathway which wound along the valley, often presented a glimpse of "a small hamlet embowered in the bosom of a woody knoll; or the venerable convent, which on the summit of a hill, skirted with cypress trees, seemed to characterise the solemn, still repose, which imagination attaches to monastic life." *

St. Clair dispatched his servants to Bologna to purchase books; and a little parlour, which opened to the point of the house, was speedily converted into a library; the Marquis augmented his rustic establishment, by a small stock of poultry, several

* Vide Smith's Views, published in January, 1752.

young kids, and a nightingale, which Sabina adopted, and which had its fragrant habitation amidst the festoons of jessamin that adorned the library window. It was in this romantic elysium that the family of de Sevrac first tasted happiness; all the glare of splendid life presented nothing so gratifying to the senses, or so soothing to the mind! It was here, that the emptiness of rank was forgotten, and the duplicity of courts remembered only with abhorrence: no murmur of regret, no expression of discontent ever escaped their lips, except for the sorrows of those ill-fated exiles, who were destined to wander, unsheltered by such an asylum.

It was the custom of the Abbot, once a month to descend from his lofty habitation, and by shewing himself to the peasantry, to render them happy: the smile of unbending sanctity, seemed a sort of sun-shine, which ripened their hopes of immortality; and the sound of his voice had, to their ears,
all

all the sweetness of seraphic harmony. The Marquis, whose universal philanthropy taught him to respect even those weaknesses which tend to the moral good of society, assisted in the rustic preparations for the Abbot's visit: Mademoiselle de Sevrac who had adopted the dress of the peasantry, on that day added the decoration of a few wild flowers on her head and bosom, which only served to heighten its simplicity, of which the pink apron and the unstiffened corset were not the least objects of alteration.

All the minutiae of deception, all the affectation of humility, and all the arrogance of power, were displayed by the Abbot in his visit of divine consolation. The peasantry bowed before him, and their best offerings were laid at his feet, while he, whose thoughts were bent on things above, for his convent stood on the summit of a mountain, passed along their double ranks, with the dignity of a superior! The poor

flock followed their kind shepherd, as became their lowly situation, with meekness veneration and humility; they knew that he was the best judge of what led to supreme felicity; for experience is the sunshine of wisdom, and the abbot was no stranger to the full practice of every consolation.

To such a being, the charms of Mademoiselle de Sevrac must have been more than striking; he met her at the close of the procession, and all celestial attractions were forgotten, while his senses paid homage to the graces of a mere mortal. St. Clair, who accompanied Sabina, observed the Abbot's emotions, and by a smile which betrayed something more of ridicule than satisfaction, relieved her from the gloating gaze of her sanctified admirer. The Abbot returned to his convent, and the attentions which he had bestowed on Mademoiselle de Sevrac served

served as a prelude to more important adventures.

As soon as the Abbé Le Blanc recovered strength, he related the events of the melancholy interval, between his quitting the chateau of Montnoir, and being discovered at the cottage of the peasant; "Hearing the dreadful account," said he, "which Mr. St. Clair related, respecting the attempts to assassinate him in the forest; and knowing the Marquis to be incapable of such an outrage, I instantly departed for Milan. On inquiry at the house of Monsieur Ravillon, I was informed, that he had on the preceding evening quitted the city, and that the Marquis was also gone, as it was believed, to meet him. I knew that they had not travelled towards the forest of Montnoir, having just come from thence; I therefore, after many fruitless inquiries, visited the different gates of the city, and being still unsuccessful, was on the point

of returning to the chateau; when a courier arriving, from Bologna as he passed the gates, informed me that only a few leagues off he had met a person exactly answering my description.

“Anxious for the safety of the Marquis, I hired a post-horse and continued my route, night and day, (still, from village to village, gaining information that the traveller was gone before me;) till I reached Modena. It was not, till I was thus far advanced on my journey, that I began to think of my finances; and, led on, mile after mile by the hope of overtaking Monsieur de Sevrac, nearly vanquished by the sultry rays of a parching sun, and sinking under the pressure of painful agitation, I arrived at Bologna.

“The small sum which I took with me was by this time nearly exhausted. I found that the traveller had gained the start of me so far, that grief almost overpowered the efforts

efforts of fortitude, and I was nearly reduced to despondency.

“ The words of the affassin filled my mind with such a combination of dreadful ideas, that I knew not how to decide. Only two Louis d'ors now remained of my little store, and after many struggles between hope and apprehension, I determined to proceed on foot, and by frequent inquiries to trace the Marquis to the end of his journey. All those who afforded me information, described the person whom I pursued, as one who travelled with great caution, and not without signs of some secret purpose. This intelligence strengthened my resolution, and had not power to arrest my steps, though every moment threatened annihilation.

“ It was after a day of extreme fatigue, when, having contracted my refreshment to the narrow limits of my means, I found my strength completely subdued, and seating myself

myself upon a bank, near the skirts of a wood, resigned myself patiently to the will of Heaven, every moment expecting a release from my misfortunes. Night came on, and darkness obscured every object round me. I heard travellers, passing and re-passing, not fifty paces from where I lay, but I had not power to rise, and, alas! my voice was too feeble to reach them. The thick mists gathering on every side, and succeeding a day of scorching heat, augmented my wretchedness; the thin cloathing, which was adapted to the fervor of a meridian sun, soon imbibed the penetrating damps of midnight; and my situation was mournful!

“ Though my limbs failed to support me, and my voice was too feeble to make my complaints heard by the passing traveller, my senses were all alive to the miseries of my fate! I watched the twinkling stars that studded the vast expanse above me, and at times, forgot the sorrows of my

my heart, in admiring the works of my Creator !

“ At last the dawn appeared, the cheerful light gleamed over the mountains; the birds began to cheer me with their songs, and the warm breezes descended from the reddening sky, which spread a refreshing glow over the landscape. Again I endeavoured to raise my feeble frame, but my strength was gone, and I believed that the cold hand of death pressed heavily upon me. It was at this moment that the poor peasant found me; he wept over me; he raised me from the earth; supported me; and bore me to his little home!” Mademoiselle de Sevrac no longer able to conceal her emotions threw her arms round the venerable Le Blanc, and embracing him, entreated that he would drop the subject. “ We know the rest, my dear Abbé,” said she; “ spare us the pain of dwelling on your sufferings.” The Abbé continued—

“ Shall I expatiate on my own calamities, and be silent when the most sublime philanthropy demands my praise. No! The good Giovanni cheerfully resigned to me his narrow bed; night after night on a few scattered rushes he lay and watched me. His boy was my companion, while my preserver fetched me milk and fruit from the neighbouring mountains.”

“ Why did you not apply to the Abbot of the Convent?” cried Madame de Sevrac.

“ I did,” answered the Abbé Le Blanc; and he daily sent me a small portion of the blackest bread, and the fourest wine. I had little appetite for either. He pleaded the poverty of his convent as an apology for his coarse fare; and told my little messenger, that the very pathway to his holy dwelling, was worn away by the footsteps of emigrated priests! But this was not all; for I found, that my poor peasant, having,
on

on my account neglected his labours in the vineyard, was dismissed from his occupation, and menaced with the Abbot's eternal displeasure!"

"Did you inform the Abbot of your rank, and situation, when at Paris!" said the Marquis.

"Heaven forbid," replied the Abbé, "that the heart which is shut against a fellow creature's complaints should have an opportunity of insulting his misfortunes!"

"Here let your sorrows rest;" said the Marquis, "the person whom you followed, and who travelled with such caution, was Monsieur Ravillon: the same night, on which I left Milan, he departed for Tuscany, in pursuit of the Count Monteleoné; and only returned, from thence very lately." The Marquis related the fatal events that had taken place at Milan,
and

and they excited a shower of tears from the faithful Abbé."

In this tranquil retreat, de Sevrac hoped to bury his accumulated store of afflictions; for, at length, his mind was almost alienated from every chimera of splendour, and his heart whenever examined, made a tacit self-confession of dawning happiness; the days which had passed in luxurious folly he now remembered with sorrow; for, there is no sort of prodigality which leaves such deep and wounding regret, as the waste of time; hours return no more, but the pursuits in which they were occupied, will press upon the memory, and every trivial instance of neglect then magnifies itself into an unpardonable error. While youth throbs in the veins, and vivacity gives the heart additional pulsation, we think that the early part of life should be devoted to enjoyment; and the task of mental toil is protracted, till the faculties are supposed to be more strong, and the judgment

judgment more ripened. Thus we often begin our rational pursuits, when Time, whose industry surpasses ours, commences his inevitable lesson: but the enervating pleasures of luxurious life, are not to be discarded, as we cast off a tinsel garment, in order that we may suit ourselves to the changes of the seasons; for the fascinations of the world seldom fail to incapacitate the mind for those acquirements, which it had not resolution to cultivate when in its pristine vigour.

St. Clair, who began to dread the influence of a passion, which, though the most tender, he considered as the most unfortunate; day after day talked of continuing his travels, and his purposed departure was as repeatedly protracted, upon some trifling or feigned excuse. The Marquis, whose opinions were not often erroneous, had long suspected the tenour of St. Clair's affections; a mixture of pride and alarm awakened the most painful

ful ideas, and by degrees lessened the zeal of his attentions. He recollected, that, only two short years before that period, Mademoiselle de Sevrac was considered as an object that might have gratified the ambition of the proudest noble in the court of France: he beheld her, beautiful; for, without a parent's eyes he might have made that discovery; he had promoted the cultivation of her mind, as far as an accomplished old *devotée*, who was her *gouvernante*, could expand it; and, from her tuition, she was ushered into the highest circles, where she had been taught to give a polish to every native grace, and to fascinate by her manners, as much as by her person. The Marquis perceived that St. Clair was sensible of his daughter's attractions, and, trembling, lest his assiduities should render the charm reciprocal, determined to demand a speedy explanation.

It had been an invariable rule with Mademoiselle de Sevrac when at Paris,

to confess once a month; a ceremony, which is frequently performed to rid the conscience of old sins, in order to make room for a new assortment. This part of her education she owed to her devout *gouvernante*, and, as it had been one of those few customs which could not prejudice the health of her soul, even if it did not aid its purification, her mother, though a protestant, had never opposed it. Some months had elapsed since Mademoiselle de Sevrac had been to confess; and she fancied, that even in the practice of every innocent propensity where no impure or impious thought ever obtruded on her imagination, she had a weighty charge upon her conscience, which it was absolutely necessary to throw off. On inquiry of the peasantry she was informed that the Abbot of the convent, on the first Friday in every month heard confessions; and she resolved to embrace the earliest opportunity of prostrating herself before him.

The

The day came, and Mademoiselle de Sevrac, early in the morning, repaired to the convent, where she found such a large assembly of the peasantry before the gates, that she had no chance of being admitted for some hours. The Abbot hearing that she was anxious to appear before his cell, made his excuses, and requested that she would return to the convent at the close of evening, when he should be more at leisure to hear her confession.

Disappointed in her hopes of absolution, she was returning to the Chateau-neuf when on the borders of the vineyard, she was met by St. Clair. He accosted her with a degree of cold formality to which she had not been accustomed; the change in his conduct gave her pain, because she was conscious of not deserving a diminution in his esteem. She blushed, with a mixture of confusion and mortified pride; her embarrassment augmented St. Clair's chagrin, and they strolled slowly on, without utter-
ing

ing a syllable, till they saw the Marquis advancing up a small meadow, which led from their house to the vineyard.

Mademoiselle de Sevrac involuntarily turned out of the vineyard, taking the path through a narrow wood which skirted the valley; St. Clair still walked pensively by her side; his heart was bursting with anguish; a thousand conflicts bewildered his imagination; all that could torture the soul, or urge it to despair, at that moment assailed him. His countenance betrayed the emotions of his mind, his whole mien was disordered; he snatched the hand of Mademoiselle de Sevrac eagerly, held it for a few moments; and then, shuddering, threw it from him.

“ St. Clair,” said she, with tender concern, “ this extravagance alarms me! I left you gay and happy; why do I now see you wild and agitated! This retirement, which is so well suited to our misfortunes,
is

is irksome to you : we shall lament your absence, St. Clair, yet reason requires that you should depart."

"It does indeed !" cried St. Clair, "but who could be reasonable with such an object before him : yet I will not repine, I have been rash, vain, and unworthy ;—Oh ! Sabina, how severely am I punished for my temerity !"

"In what does your temerity consist, St. Clair ?" enquired Mademoiselle de Sevrac.

"Who can be more madly rash," replied St. Clair, "than he, who risks his peace of mind, knowing that there is infinite danger, and conscious that there is no remedy ? Does the wretch who advances, with his eyes open and his senses awake, to the edge of a precipice, deserve pity, if he falls headlong to destruction ?"

"I think

“ I think he does ;” answered Mademoiselle de Sevrac tenderly.

“ Then your humanity misleads you ;” continued St. Clair ; “ reason was given to man, as a shield to defend him against the perils of existence ; and, if it cannot act on the defensive, if all the keener perceptions of the soul only serve to convey a more acute sense of misery, why, the idiot is most blest, and apathy alone desirable.”

“ Do not the raptures of sensibility requite us for its pains ?” said Mademoiselle de Sevrac.

“ Where time promises those joys,” answered St. Clair ; “ where the wretch has to look forward with delight, there may be some compensation for the agonies of suspense : but where there is no hope ; where the traveller sees one long, dark wilder-

wilderness, through which he is eternally destined to wander ! what is his consolation, and where are his raptures ?”

“ But that is not your case ;” replied Mademoiselle de Sevrac, “ surely your destiny must wear a milder aspect ; blest with all the graces of mind that can ennoble humanity, the miseries of despondency cannot darken your prospects : believe me, St. Clair, you were born to be happy ; some amiable woman of your own country and religion, will banish the despair that now overwhelms you.”

Every syllable of Mademoiselle de Sevrac’s last words seemed to penetrate St. Clair’s heart. “ Ah ! Sabina !” said he, struggling with emotions scarcely governable, “ I must leave you ! I can remain here no longer : every object tends to increase my peril, and every hour adds a link to the chain of my misfortunes ! thank

Heaven ! I have not violated the laws of ospitality ; I have never professed to love you."

"Never," said Mademoiselle de Sevrac blushing.

"Never ;" repeated St. Clair firmly.—
"Have you any reason to believe that you are dearer to me than all other objects ?" continued St. Clair, watching her countenance and wishing to receive a flat confirmation of his last assertion.

Mademoiselle de Sevrac hesitated ; her blushes deepened ; she half smiled, while her trembling tongue faintly articulated, "What a question !"

"Nay, do not hesitate," continued St. Clair—"Be candid : the beautiful sincerity of your nature will not suffer you to dissemble."

"To

"To dissemble, St. Clair!" said Sabina, piqued at the supposition; "You question with the severity of an inquisitor."

"Because you are before the secret tribunal of the heart:" replied St. Clair.

"Does my punishment, or my happiness depend on *your* fiat?" said Mademoiselle de Sevrac archly. St. Clair felt the severity of her question; it acted as a check upon his self-love, and he could make no answer; a pause of several minutes ensued; a thousand conflicts by turns assailed his imagination; the *naiveté* of Mademoiselle de Sevrac had more severely reprimanded his vanity, than the severest reproof would have done. After a long silence, during which they advanced into the middle of the wood, St. Clair resumed the conversation.

"T "

"Every

“ Every thing I behold, every word that I hear you utter, encreases the spell which bewilders my imagination; I have long considered myself as an intruder on your enchanting solitude. I have often blamed myself; I have determined to depart; but an irresistible something, an invisible power, strong, yet incomprehensible, enchains my faculties: I know not what to call it; I dare not think it more than the natural tribute of admiration which superior merit extorts from the contemplative mind; and yet, Sabina, I cannot help wishing that you had been less lovely, less attractive!” Mademoiselle de Sevrac was embarrassed by St. Clair’s conversation, and felt considerable relief when she reached the door of the chateau-neuf. “ Have you made your confession?” said Madame de Sevrac as they approached her.

The question was an embarrassing one; and, not being immediately answered, Madame de Sevrac was induced to repeat

it. Sabina smiled, and replied in the negative. "You," said Madame de Sevrac addressing St. Clair, "you have no idea of these matters: you know not the felicity of unburthening the soul, of laying open all its secrets, and receiving that celestial comfort, of which purity alone is susceptible."

"Alas! Madam," answered St. Clair, a little at a loss how to begin his reply, "were I to open my soul, were I to confess every secret emotion that actuates its feelings, I should not even hope for absolution; my future days would be wasted in eternal penance."

"Make me your confessor," said Madame de Sevrac, "and believe me as capable of judging the human heart, as many who wear the garb of sanctity. What are your sins, that you speak of them with such despondency?"

"They

“ They are sins against a Divinity !” replied St. Clair, looking significantly at Mademoiselle de Sevrac, whose confusion encreased with every word he uttered.

“ I fear they are mortal sins,” said Madame de Sevrac ; “ and if I guess rightly there is but one road to contrition.”

St. Clair eagerly requested her to name it.

“ A pilgrimage,” replied Madame de Sevrac smiling.

“ You are right,” said St. Clair—“ I confess the penetration of your mind, and the justice of your penance : there is but one way for me to take ; it will be a tedious journey, and my heart will often sigh for this delicious abode of virtue and sensibility !—I have hitherto been a mere wanderer ; all scenes have presented an equal portion of rapturous felicity and excruciat-

ing pain : but I will learn to chuse the quiet path of life, and if it is not all sunshine, animated with eternal spring ; it will, I trust, be exempt from storms, and not wholly barren."

" Why should you change the course you have hitherto taken ?" said Madame de Sevrac.

" Because my sentiments are no longer what they were : I am like one, new born ; objects interest me that, till lately, never even excited my attention."

" Are you not pleased to feel that your mind is more capable of acquiring universal knowledge ?" said Madame de Sevrac ; " for to become a perfect citizen of the world, every minute particle of creation should be deemed worthy of investigation. Philosophy may teach you to bear the vexations of life, but experience only can instruct you to avoid them."

" Yet

“ Yet, there are ills, my charming moralist,” replied St. Clair, “ which even the wisest cannot foresee.”

“ But there are few which the dullest cannot fly from,” said Madame de Sevrac; St. Clair again felt the meaning of her words, and after a short pause continued—

“ To fly from the object which occasions our sufferings, is like leaping from a sinking wreck into the tempestuous ocean: we think that there is a chance of escaping from the dangers which surround us; but we find, that we only protract our miseries, and are, at last, destined to perish.”

“ Yet, lives there a being who would not make the trial?” said Madame de Sevrac.—St. Clair was silent, but he perfectly understood her meaning.

The Marquis returned to dinner, and the conversation became general : St. Clair bore the smallest share in it, and, as soon as an opportunity offered, secluded himself in his chamber. Sabina prepared herself for appearing before the cell of the devout Abbot, and early in the evening repeated her visit to the Convent.

CHAP. X.

"Virtue may be assail'd but never hurt,

"Surpriz'd by unjust force, but not enthrall'd."

MILTON.

IT was near sunset when Mademoiselle de Sevrac reached the Convent, the Marquis accompanied her to the gates, and promised to wait for her return, in the wood near the vineyard. One of the fathers led her to the chapel, where she was requested to remain till the leisure of Palerma, who was then deeply engaged in his devotions.

Mademoiselle de Sevrac's purity of mind rendered little preparation necessary for the awful task which she was about to undertake; unoccupied by the recollection of her own offences, she employed this melancholy

lancholy interval in pitying the frailties of St. Clair. A profound silence added much to the solemnity of every thing that surrounded her; the tall rows of cypresses which encircled the Convent served to deepen the shade of declining day, and the slow waving of the branches occasioned an undulating light over every part of the chapel. She examined the sacred solitude with awful attention. The altar was magnificently decorated: a lofty crucifix of massy silver, richly inlaid with gems, was placed before a large and beautiful painting by Raphael. The steps were covered with tapestry, richly wrought with gold, and the walls on every side hung with canvasses which exhibited the works of the most celebrated masters.

From the chapel a gothic door opened to an inner apartment; it had been left ajar; and Mademoiselle de Sevrac, was tempted to approach the threshold.

A table

A table stood in the middle of the room, on which she saw displayed all the luxuries of the season; the richest fruits, added to the most delicious preserves, bread of the finest quality, and wines of every description. A couch covered with purple silk stood near a window, which was shaded by a spreading fig tree, luxuriantly laden with ripe fruit. Such was the abode of humility and mortification! Mademoiselle de Sevrac was lost in astonishment; she recollected the message which had been conveyed to the Abbé Le Blanc, and a train of ideas pressed on her mind which occupied it, till she was roused from meditation by the presence of the Abbot.

He appeared somewhat confused at finding her in the inner apartment—but, with no inconsiderable portion of address attributed the luxurious table to the presence of a noble guest, who had condescended to pass the day at the Convent. There was an easy familiarity in the Abbot's

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manner

manner so unlike the sanctity of his former appearance that Mademoiselle de Sevrac could scarcely believe it was the same person. She endeavoured to conceal her surprise, apologized for intruding at an unseasonable hour, and was about to leave him.

“ Beautiful stranger ! I greet you with my benediction ! ” said Palerma, taking Mademoiselle de Sevrac’s hand, and leading her towards the couch ; where, as soon as she had seated herself, (for her amazement scarcely left her the power to resist), the Abbot placing himself beside her, seemed lost in contemplation.

Mademoiselle de Sevrac’s manner bore evidence of her surprise, and the blushes which overspread her countenance only tended to encrease the admiration of Palerma. He pressed her to partake of the fruits and wine which covered the table before them. His voice, his words, and his

his manner, were soothingly impressive. He spoke of the known sanctity of the fathers, whom Heaven had wedded to the solitude of the mountains : where the benignant hand of nature repaid the purity of their lives, with all that could sustain them, under the extreme severity of penance and mortification.

The athletic form and animated countenance of Palerma, seemed to contradict every syllable he uttered : scarcely turned of forty, with health that gave expression to a dark and handsome countenance, his person presented no traits of abstinence or humiliation : his manners were the prototypes of the subtilty of his mind ; his language flowed not from the heart, neither did his devotion seem fixed on immortality.

The gloom of evening encreased every moment ; and Mademoiselle de Sevrac, finding the Abbot inclined to converse on

every subject, except that, which was the purpose of her visit, rose to depart. There was something of austerity in her manner which commanded the Abbot's respect, and, without opposing her wish, he led her into the chapel where he requested that she would wait a few minutes for his return. The long windows shed a crimson light, reflected from the west, and the shadows of the trees, perpetually in motion formed a thousand varying figures on the marble pavement; while the glowing colour of the sky gave additional lustre to the gems which adorned the crucifix, and a richer tint to the paintings that hung round the chapel.

Mademoiselle de Sevrac waited a considerable time, and no Abbot returned. The redness of the evening sky softened into a deepened purple, which every moment assumed a darker shade, till all objects became indistinct, and an universal gloom over-spread the Convent.

On

On a sudden the door was opened, and a venerable monk, whose cowl nearly covered his inclining head, passed along the chapel. Sabina approached him, and was preparing to speak; when he waved his hand, and opening a small door, instantly vanished. His dress being dark, and the chapel nearly obscure, she could scarcely see him; but his short slow steps and bending form, conveyed to her the perfect idea of enfeebled age.

She tried to open the chapel door, but it was fastened on the outside; a dreadful tremour possessed her spirits, and she knocked loudly and repeatedly: every effort proving unsuccessful, she found her way to the small entrance through which the monk had passed, and immediately discovered that it led to a flight of steps, at the foot of which she perceived the blue glimmering flame of a lamp. She descended, took it from where it hung, and proceeded along a narrow passage, at the
end

end of which, another door of communication presented itself : she pushed it gently, and it opened ;—she entered a long vault ; on each side she saw several stone coffins arranged near the walls, and at the farthest end stood a figure of the Holy Virgin ; before which, two small tapers burnt dimly, amidst the damp air which surrounded them.

She advanced along the vault trembling at every step ; but the idea that she should find the venerable monk, who had descended before her, inspired her with new courage : she was not deceived ; for before she reached the image of the virgin, she beheld him reclined on one of the stone coffins in a pensive attitude, as if absorbed in profound meditation.

She ran towards him, but he rose abruptly, before she had time to speak ; his cowl entirely covered his face ; he hurried along the vault—she followed ;—

in

in a moment he vanished; as he disappeared Mademoiselle de Sevrac heard something fall, with a ringing sound, on the stone floor; she bent her lamp towards the spot; and her blood almost stagnated with horror, when she saw the dreadful poniard which she first discovered in the chateau of Montnoir!

She stood for some moments, pale, and motionless as a statue; she then looked round in every direction, but she perceived no passage by which the monk could have escaped; she knelt, and holding her lamp near the ground, again examined the poniard: it was too remarkable to be mistaken: Horror and surprize rendered her desperate, she resolved to arm herself with it, and to exert all her courage. As she stretched forth her hand, she looked with an imploring eye towards the image of the virgin—the head instantly bowed—and a deep groan echoed along the vault.

Believing

Believing herself to be under the immediate and particular observation of supernatural powers, and having been taught to consider that Being as most favoured, to whom miracles were shewn, she stood wrapt in reverential awe; she fancied that the virgin smiled upon her, and every instant waited for an explanation of her mysterious adventure. From the earliest days of infancy the poison of superstition had been suffered to grow on her credulity, and the root which it had taken in her mind, was not to be easily eradicated. With unceasing veneration she continued to cross herself, and to utter the most pious prayers before the image; which she considered as the oracle of divine truth. Her hand which had been arrested by the motion of the figure, was a second time stretched forth towards the poniard; again the virgin bowed her head, and Mademoiselle de Sevrac thought herself authorized to proceed.

With

With an inspired resolution she grasped the handle, but no sooner had she raised it from the ground, than the image shook, the tapers fell extinguished, and an awful voice pronounced—"remember!"

Mademoiselle de Sevrac was overpowered with astonishment: the poniard dropped from her hand, and her blood thrilled with horror: the virgin's nod of assent had inspired her with courage, which vanished instantaneously at the symptoms of her displeasure. She was near sinking to the earth, when she heard footsteps approaching, while a monk enquired who passed in the vault.

She hastened towards the place from whence the voice proceeded, and for the first time discovered a dark curtain, which, being of the same colour as the walls, had till then escaped her observation. She drew it back, but she recoiled with horror,
when

when she found that it concealed a niche, filled with the bones of departed friars.

The curtain suddenly dropping from her powerless grasp, occasioned an air, which extinguished her lamp; and she was left in total darkness. All the faculties of her soul now began to lose the powers of action; her whole frame seemed to petrify with amazement and terror: she still turned her eyes towards the virgin, but a blank vacancy of darkness rendered every object invisible. As well might she have hoped to recall the promethean spark to a lifeless bosom, as to illumine the broken tapers by her devout supplications.

In this melancholy solitude she remained during several minutes, not daring to move, lest she should stumble over a stone coffin, or clasp the joint of a mouldering skeleton, when she perceived a dim light moving slowly towards her. For a time it continued

nued to approach, but she saw no person, no hand, that seemed to carry it! Concluding that her prayers had been heard, and her entreaties complied with, she groped across the vault, to meet, what she thought, the visionary flame. As she advanced, the light receded, and she heard footsteps not far distant: she stretched forth her arm, and instantly grasped a thin woollen curtain similar to that which hung before the opposite niche.

Urged on by a desperate courage she again ventured to examine the place which it was calculated to conceal; and on drawing it back, she perceived a long passage, at the extremity of which a venerable father, was hastening from her, and carrying a light which had appeared through the coarse woollen that composed the partition.

Mademoiselle de Sevrac ran after, and soon overtook him; he seemed much surprized -

surprized at finding her in so solitary a place, conjured her to compose her spirits, and promised to lead her safe out of the Convent. As they ascended a flight of steps for that purpose, a solemn silence prevailed. The monk was one of the oldest of the fraternity; and by his habit, which scantily covered a meagre and emaciated form, seemed in no degree to partake of the Abbot's munificence. There was a something gracious and unrepining in his look and manner, that inspired Sabina with confidence. His eyes though deeply sunk in their sockets, beamed with benevolence; the wrinkles on his wan cheek, looked as if they were channels for a tear of sensibility; and his white beard flowed on his breast, while his lank figure and bending shoulders bespoke the pressure of age—unblest by the comforts of prosperity. Mademoiselle de Sevrac grasped his arm with all her remaining strength; but her departure was interrupted by the Abbot, who, on hearing their footsteps, came to stop them.

“ Padre

“ Padre Evangelista,” said the Abbot, “ you may retire ; I will conduct this fair stranger to our gates as soon as she has made her confession.” Then taking Sabina’s hand, which the venerable monk seemed reluctantly to resign, he led her to the chapel, which was illuminated, particularly, near the crucifix and round the altar, with numberless wax tapers of every colour.

“ I am now at leisure,” said the Abbot, with a tone of commanding austerity, as he closed the doors, and entered his cell. Sabina approached, and knelt before the grate, but the agitation of her spirits nearly overwhelmed her ; she paused for some minutes, in order to recover her fortitude and compose her mind : the timidity which heightened the blushes on the cheek of Mademoiselle de Sevrac ; the awful splendour of the chapel ; the vivid coloured flames ascending from the long tapers, which were arranged round the glittering crucifix,

crucifix, and the profound silence which reigned on every side, presented a scene more easily imagined than described.

While Sabina endeavoured to collect her scattered thoughts, the Abbot, unseen by her, had an opportunity of observing the emotions which struggled in her mind. Trembling, and half fearful, she drew the ebony cross from her bosom, raised her eyes towards Heaven full of tears, laid it on the step of the cell, and was preparing to make her confession, when the altar shook, and "remember" was again repeated.

"Some transgression of the deepest dye," said the Abbot sternly, "produces these awful and supernatural signs! Your only hope rests on a full confession." These words were uttered in a low and solemn tone, calculated to reach no ear but Mademoiselle de Sevrac's, and intended to impress her imagination with the importance

tance of the charge. Every limb trembled convulsively; the cold tremor of horror crept along her veins; she dreaded to offend the Abbot, at the same time that she feared, still more, the invisible power which intimidated her soul: a torrent of tears in some degree relieved her overflowing heart, and, upon a second lesson of rebuke, she placed her quivering lips to the grating, and in a low voice made her full confession to the attentive abbot; imploring him, in the language of contrition, to absolve her from an oath, which destroyed her repose, and endangered the existence of her father.

Her confession being over she waited with humble sorrow for the penitential injunction. The Abbot remitted much of the rigour that she was taught to expect by the awful signals which she had observed from the altar, on condition that she kept her vow inviolate. He represented the enormity of breaking an oath,
pledged

pledged on a relick so sacred ; and menaced, that should she be guilty of such an unpardonable sin, the anathemas of episcopal vengeance would fall upon her with a sentence no less dreadful than final excommunication.

Mademoiselle de Sevrac shuddered at the idea, and rose to depart ; the Abbot, with mysterious sanctity, promised to acquaint her what penance would be demanded for her other venial offences, assuring her that the chief object of her concern was the oath which she had taken, in which she was less guilty than unfortunate. He conducted her from the chapel, with many glances of tender solicitude, all of which she considered as meant for the advantage of her soul's repose, and wholly abstracted from every mortal affection. Padre Evangelista was desired to attend her home, and she quitted the Convent, leaving the Abbot's mind adoring another idol beside the Sancta Maria.

The

The solemn word, twice uttered, the repeated inspiration of the image, and the tremulous movement of the altar, all united to convince Mademoiselle de Sevrac, that the supreme Power sanctified her vow, and that it was extorted from her, for some hidden purpose which it would be impious to scrutinize. For, to pry into the arcana of religious rites; to look farther into the catalogue of mysteries which envelope the book of fate, was one of those offences which she had been taught to think, unpardonable: her confessor was the keeper of her conscience, and, without his concurrence, every step towards knowledge would be little less than profanation. A parent's life was of less importance than the safety of her own soul; and an oath, extorted by a villain, was deemed sufficiently sacred, to bind an innocent child in a conspiracy, even against the Being who gave her existence.

The good father Evangelista conducted Sabina to the Chateau-neuf, where he found Madame de Sevrac in the deepest distress. The Marquis, after waiting till twilight closed, enquired at the Convent for his daughter, and was informed that she had departed some time. He traversed every path of the vineyard, and every intricate maze of the wood; he flew to Giovanni's cottage, which had been the asylum of the Abbé Le Blanc, but every enquiry proved fruitless, and he was nearly frantic with apprehension. The agonies of a parent's bosom, were mingled with repentment and rage, when the Marquis discovered that St. Clair was also absent. No doubt remained in his mind but that some treachery detained Mademoiselle de Sevrac; or, that, influenced by the persuasions of St. Clair, she had withdrawn herself from the peaceful solitude in which destiny had placed her.

Madame

Madame de Sevrac confirmed these suspicions by relating the conversation which took place in the morning ; she had examined the heart of St. Clair, and found that its wounds were of the most dangerous nature. She had, as plainly as she could without violating the laws of hospitality, counselled him to travel ; and, to the discovery which she had made, united with the admonishing inuendoes which she uttered, she attributed his abrupt and rash departure.

The Marquis was absent from home when St. Clair returned to clear himself from the suspicion which had unjustly fallen upon him. As soon as he heard that Mademoiselle de Sevrac was not to be found, his distraction if possible exceeded that of her father. In a paroxysm of frenzy he rushed out of the house, and proceeded, scarcely knowing whither, towards the vineyard. Day had closed some time ; the peasantry weary with toil, had

retired to rest: the paths in every direction were bewildering, and the wood presented the most impervious darkness; but St. Clair was no longer guided by the influence of reason; a thousand ideas rushed across his brain, and each succeeding thought tended to augment his distraction.

He wandered till near midnight, every cottage, every avenue of the wood and vineyard, was explored, over and over: he ascended the mountain, called repeatedly on Sabina, and still no traces of her served to alleviate his despair. Overwhelmed with the anguish of his mind, and weary with exercise, he returned to the Chateau-neuf.

Sabina, who, long before midnight had been conducted safe home by Father Evangelista, with joy welcomed his return; her first question was whether he had met the Marquis; St. Clair briefly replied, that he believed he had. Madame

de Sevrac's affectionate solicitude, anticipated some horrible calamity, and her fears were confirmed, by St. Clair's mysterious answers. A new scene of affliction now displayed itself. Every countenance evinced the most perplexing emotions. St. Clair's mind seemed full of rumination, and his refusing to explain the wonder which rapt it, augmented the grief of the whole family.

During this moment of dreadful consternation a loud knocking at the door occasioned a mixture of hope and fear, that deprived every one present of the power to open it. St. Clair seemed to smother a marked sense of a wrong received; and, by traversing the room in extreme perturbation, encreased the alarm of Madame de Sevrac and her daughter. The knocking at the door was repeated, and the Marquis's voice demanded entrance: Sabina flew to obey him, and

St.

St. Clair, after viewing him for a moment, with evident indignation avoided his presence, by retiring with precipitation to his chamber.



END OF VOL. I.

ERRATA.

Page	Line	
40,	19,	for <i>Madame</i> , read <i>Madam</i> .
41,	3,	— <i>Madam</i> , read <i>Madame</i> .
52,	9,	— <i>placed</i> , read <i>fixed</i> .
59,	5,	— <i>the</i> , read <i>her</i> .
—	21,	— <i>it</i> (twice), read <i>they</i> .
71,	16,	— <i>instantly</i> , read <i>immediately</i> .
87,	19,	— <i>attrocities</i> , read <i>atrocities</i> .
111,	10,	— <i>lead</i> , read <i>led</i> .
118,	10,	— omit the comma, after <i>gracefully</i> .
120,	9,	— <i>found</i> , read <i>discovered</i> .
—	15,	— <i>proceeding</i> , read <i>proceeded</i> .
182,	4,	— <i>placed</i> , read <i>raised</i> .
193,	22,	— <i>lessen</i> , read <i>soften</i> .
227,	16,	— <i>return</i> , read <i>returned</i> .
230,	9,	— <i>viel</i> , read <i>veil</i> .
235,	13,	— <i>over</i> , read <i>above</i> .
—	18,	— <i>pourtray</i> , read <i>portray</i> .
238,	2,	— <i>forth</i> , read <i>out</i> .
270,	22,	— <i>fides</i> , read <i>screen</i> .
271,	18,	— <i>point</i> , read <i>front</i> .
273,	12,	— <i>alteration</i> , read <i>admiration</i> .
277,	16,	read, <i>I had</i> .
279,	5,	for <i>chear</i> , read <i>console</i> .
286,	22,	— <i>embarrasments</i> , read <i>embarrassments</i> .